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BROWNING'S PARACELSUS

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BEING THE TEXT OF BROWNING'S POEM WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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LONDON

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12 JUN 1962

First Published in 1909

PREFACE

TWO motives impelled me to the undertaking of this small task, which I and another have shared.

The first was the desire to please my dear old friend Dr. G. U. Pope, late Reader in Tamil and Telugu at Oxford. He, who had known Browning intimately, edited in 1897 the poem of *A Death in the Desert*, and it was his plan and wish to deal with others in the same way, since, as he often said, Browning needs and repays editing more than most of our poets. But in 1897 he was already seventy-six years old, and though his wonderful vitality and keen interest in life and literature were never obscured or impaired during the eleven years that remained, he yet became increasingly conscious of the need to husband his resources, and concentrate on his special work as interpreter of Tamil thought to the West. It was for this reason that he urged upon me a task which lay specially near his own heart—the giving forth to fellow-students of some notes upon Browning's great early poem ; and his last words to me were—"Do the *Paracelsus* ! And remember, 'Kunst ist lange, Leben kurz.'"

When, a little later, the news of his passing reached me, I felt that my own incapacity must not be allowed to weigh against the injunction given ; and

I have been very conscious of help received from him during its fulfilment.

The second motive has been my own wish to strike, if but once, the note of Unity to which all the instruments of the world are being tuned; and the vibrations of that note have a power independent alike of instruments and their players. It is our hope that they may be carried by this book to one or two whose ears they have not yet reached.

I need hardly add that the work thus laid upon me has proved its own reward. Indeed, so great has been the delight of doing it that I look forward to issuing notes of the same kind upon some of Browning's other poems, taken singly or in groups, should the present volume justify its claim to existence.

In accomplishing my share of the divided labour, I have been greatly indebted to the various students who have attended my Browning lectures at King's College and elsewhere, and whose thought and enthusiasm have helped me in ways of which they were probably unconscious. Loving thanks are also due to G. M. T. for hours spent in research on my behalf. Lastly, it would be vain to try to express how much of inspiration as well as of direct suggestion I owe to my friends H. D. O., C. F. E. S., and E. M. G.—friends the very thought of whom brightens all the ways of life.

MARGARET L. LEE

77, BANBURY ROAD
OXFORD
October, 1900

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BROWNING AND PARACELSUS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

BROWNING'S CHOICE OF SUBJECT

WHAT was the state of Browning's outward and inward life at the time he wrote *Paracelsus?* Not much is really known of either.

He was twenty-three years of age, and after a desultory education, gained partly at private schools and partly by an irregular attendance at lectures of the London University, was living in his father's house at Camberwell, an undistinguished member of the great army of the unemployed.

Like Milton, he was enabled to do this by a paternal generosity to which the world may well pay its passing tribute; and we may believe that his thoughts, like Milton's, often turned to the writing of a work which "after-times . . . should not willingly let die." Meanwhile he read at the British Museum, qualifying himself by a study of the whole of John-

son's Dictionary for the technical part of his future labours.

We are told that the favourite poets of Browning's boyhood had been Quarles and Donne, and that it was the study of Ossian which first roused him to composition. He then passed through a Byronic phase, until, in early manhood, the influence of Keats and Shelley became paramount. It is significant that he cared little or nothing for the older romantic poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge. In 1833 appeared his first but anonymously published work *Pauline*, the expenses of which were defrayed by the elder Browning. It is full of interest to the student by reason of its monologue form, its subjectivity of treatment (it has been described as a "spiritual autobiography"), its characteristic and, in parts, wonderfully mature philosophy of life, and the beauty of its descriptive passages. But it has little plot or even coherence, and the main idea, though fine, is not consistently worked out. As an organic and artistic whole, the poem must be confessed a failure.

Besides *Pauline*, there dated from this time some poems contributed to *Fox's Journal*. In three of them at least—*Johannes Agricola*, *Porphyria's Lover*, and the lyric of "*Still Ailing, Wind*," afterwards incorporated in *James Lee's Wife*—the speaker is a man of lonely and self-centred, perhaps morbid, personality; and here Browning shares more than is usual the characteristics of other young poets—compare the nervous heroes of *Maud* and *Locksley Hall*.

He was now to choose a nobler variation upon the same theme. The pathology of genius is obscure, and there is more than a slight connection between the half-repellent and half-sublime fanaticism of a

Johannes Agricola and the visionary but altogether noble self-confidence of a Paracelsus, exclaiming—

> "I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
> I ask not: but unless God send His hail
> Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
> In some time, His good time, I shall arrive;
> He guides me and the bird. In His good time!"
> (I. 559.)

Browning's father was responsible for a larger share in the production of this second poem than the payment of the publisher's fee. The works of the great sixteenth century scientist were included in his library, and father and son shared an interest in the contents. It is said, however, to have been the French royalist, Count Amédée de Ripert-Monclar, who actually suggested the choice of Paracelsus as a subject for poetry.

There is much that would be likely to commend that choice to young Browning. He found in Paracelsus a great man, certainly misunderstood, and perhaps unjustly condemned, by modern times, therefore a fit object for his chivalrous and ardent championage. More than this, there was between hero and biographer that kind of subtle affinity which enabled Milton to identify himself with the blind Samson, and Carlyle to become the predestined interpreter of Cromwell. Browning, in fact, treats Paracelsus with a spiritual clairvoyance very rare in so young a poet, showing already the union of dramatic with metaphysical tendency which is perhaps, taking a broad view, the most salient feature of

his work. As he visualised the figure of the man whose aim it had been

> "To follow knowledge like a sinking star
> Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought,"

pursuing that search, perhaps, in ways that the world's conventional morality had disapproved, while the sublimity of the aspiration had gone unrecognised, Browning must have found in the image he called up something of the response made by Galatea to the ardour of Pygmalion; and the embodied and the disembodied entered into a pact of mutual understanding across the barrier of three hundred years of time.

Henceforth Browning's object was to justify Paracelsus, not only as a great discoverer, but as a great soul, and to prove—not that he anticipated solutions of the problems of life which the nineteenth century prides itself on having revealed—but rather that the discovery of such solutions lies without space and time, and is the heritage of all who, whether along the path of wisdom or the path of devotion, draw near, and take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

The story of Paracelsus, then, is told by Browning in no mere spirit of scholastic or even of philosophic research. It is to him a revelation, a reflection in the microcosm of the secret of the Great Universe; and as such he gives it to us, that we may be likewise illuminated by its teaching. What that teaching is we shall consider by and by.

It remains to be owned that Browning's success in communicating his message to the world was inevitably partial.

As a poem, *Paracelsus* has many faults of structure and style; as a dramatic poem it has far more. The idea, fine as it may be, is not worked out with uniform power; the degeneration and failures of Paracelsus are described with some uncertainty of touch, and the conception of Festus is not wholly free from inconsistency. Some of the weaknesses present in the original edition are got rid of in that of 1849 (the Fifth Part, which might well be considered incapable of any change for the better, reappearing practically unaltered), but others remain. It is, then, not wonderful that the power of the poem, the breadth and depth of its thought, were overlooked by the great mass of the public, which, then as now, demanded more than mere greatness in a new aspirant to fame. The small degree of our advance in this respect may be gauged by the indifference with which Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* was received as late as the year 1893.

But that the mysticism of *Paracelsus* appeals more to the twentieth century than to the mid-nineteenth we may thankfully admit; the world is nearer to Browning's point of view than it was, and many a reformer such as Paracelsus or Giordano Bruno is sympathetically studied now, where fifty years ago he would have been derided as an insane and probably fraudulent fanatic.

CHAPTER II

THE FORM OF THE POEM

IT has been said that Browning unites more than is usual the qualities of dramatist and metaphysician. In pure drama, the characters are set before us by their creator, and left to reveal themselves through word and action, but primarily through action; in narrative, and in many reflective forms of literature, we listen to what the author has to tell us concerning them, and the tendency of such work in modern times is towards minute psychological analysis of character and motive.

Browning inclined always to the former method; indeed, very few of his poems can be called entirely non-dramatic. But this is not to say that he found in the stage-drama the form best fitted to express his thought.

Several reasons may be suggested for the fact that his poems are often fuller of dramatic life than his actual plays. First, he was hampered by the conventional medium in which the playwright must work, and with which, unlike Shakspere, he had no intimacy born of practical experience as an actor. Secondly, his profound interest in psychology, shaping itself under the influences of mid-nineteenth century

thought, required more scope for first-hand discussion, digression, and comment than the stage could afford.

Browning's drama, as the many interpreters of his mind and art have not failed to demonstrate, is one which may, and indeed must—

> ". . . outgrow
> The simulation of the painted scene,
> Boards, actors, prompters, gas-light and costume,
> And take for a worthier stage the soul itself,
> With all its grand orchestral silences,
> To keep the pauses of the rhythmic sounds."
> (*Aurora Leigh*, i. 336–41.)

In short, Browning desires to study the soul of man directly, instead of confining himself to its manifestation (so partial and often misleading) in human action.[1] His endeavour is to trace—

> "Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped"
> (*Rabbi ben Ezra*, xxv.)

For by these, as he proceeds to tell us, the true worth of the human vessel is determined.

What poetic form, then, was most fitting for the expression of such a purpose? Probably the dramatic monologue, into which mould, from the appearance of *Men and Women* (the culmination of a series of experiments in "dramatic lyrics" and "dramatic romances"), Browning cast his greatest and most

[1] Cf. the letter prefixed to *Sordello*: "The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study."

varied conceptions—whether of faultless painter or dissolute monk, philosophic barbarian or dying apostle.

But twenty years earlier Browning had not wholly freed himself from the idea that dramatic characterisation demands, if not a plot dependent on action for its interest, yet at least the introduction of several speakers mutually influencing each other. Hence the form of *Paracelsus*, with its five parts or books loosely suggesting the five acts of the regular stage play, and its use of dialogue which is often practically monologue.

Character-study is the first object of the whole work, and action and outside events are often allowed to fall entirely into the background while Browning, speaking at once through and on behalf of his hero, gives us a "poetised philosophy" of extraordinary grandeur and truth.

CHAPTER III

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF PARACELSUS

THE ascertained facts of Paracelsus' life are these. He was born *c.* 1490–3, the son of a Swiss-German physician, Wilhelm Bombastus von Hohenheim, and of a lady who before her marriage had superintended the hospital at Einsiedeln. The castle of Hohenheim, whence the father and family originally took their title, was situated near Stuttgart.

The child's full name was Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim, and Paracelsus appears to be a fantastic paraphrase of the last appellation such as the mediæval mind loved—unless, indeed, as Waite suggests, it was conferred upon him by his father in alchemy, to signify his superiority to Celsus, an ancient physician of repute. Bombastus, it need hardly be said, has given to our language a word whose present meaning arises from the character and style of the philosopher, remarkable, with all their greatness, neither for humility nor simplicity. The name of Eremita, by which Erasmus sometimes alludes to his great opponent, is taken from Eremus, the Latinised form of Einsiedeln.

At this same Einsiedeln, a small town near

Zurich, the father of Paracelsus practised his profession till 1502–3, when the family moved to Villach, in Carinthia; and about 1506 the young man entered the University of Basel, after previous instruction at home and from certain German bishops. It seems that he early showed his independence of thought, and grew tired of the study of chemistry under the Benedictine Abbot Trithemius, who nevertheless was in advance of most of his contemporaries as regards the quality of his learning, and had gained considerable repute as theologian, astronomer, poet, necromancer, and exponent of cryptic writing.

Paracelsus never walked in the beaten track of academic study, and though he afterwards visited several universities, there is no proof of the legality of the title of Doctor, which was assumed by him. The independence of the young student led him to prosecute first-hand researches among mines (including those of Sweden, the Tyrol, and the East, where he familiarised himself with the properties of metals under the guidance of Oriental adepts), and, afterwards, to travel in solitude through many lands. Paracelsus had already at this time adopted the theory that knowledge derived from books is of little value, and that the scientist should first of all accumulate facts by means of direct observation. The physician, he said, must read Nature's book, and to do so must walk over the leaves.[1]

[1] "Nature is studied by examining the contents of her treasure-vaults in every country. Every part of the world represents a page in the book of Nature, and all the pages together form the book that contains the great revelations" (Preface to *Paragranum*, quoted by Hartmann).

With this end in view he studied the racial peculiarities of the different nations, and abandoned Latin and Greek in favour of what would now be called physical science—including under that term the study of the heavenly bodies, and indeed much that the modern specialist of the schools would regard as outside his province. He visited, according to his own account, most of the countries of Europe, and is said to have travelled also in Egypt and Tartary; and wherever he went he neglected no out-of-the-way source of knowledge, learning, not merely from others of his own rank, but from old women, gipsies, charlatans, and conjurors.[1] The Magnum Opus and the Elixir of Life were among the chief objects of his tireless search. During this period Paracelsus must have accumulated a huge body of learning, much of it, however, unco-ordinated and therefore comparatively useless.

In 1525–6, on account of the cures he had wrought,[2] he was appointed at the recommendation of Erasmus and Œcolampadius to fill a chair of physic and surgery in the University of Basel, and his discourses, delivered not in Latin but in his native Swiss-German,[3] seem to have been as far removed

[1] In the Preface to *Paragranum* (as quoted by Hartmann) Paracelsus writes: "I went in search of my art, often incurring danger of life. . . . We know that a lover will go a long way to meet the woman he adores; how much more will the lover of wisdom be tempted to go in search of his divine mistress!"

[2] Records and testimonials as to some of the cures of Paracelsus are laid up among the archives of Nuremburg.

[3] "This [using of German] was one of his most important acts; because in so doing he produced a reformation in science similar to the one that Luther produced in the Church. He rejected

from the conventional and academic as were those of Ruskin during his Oxford professorship. Having begun by publicly burning the works of Avicen and Galen, and assuring his hearers that the very latchets of his shoes were more learned than either physician, he proceeded to decry all authority, to criticise existing methods and schools, not without shrewd attacks upon the ignorance, greed, and pomposity of contemporary doctors, and to advise his pupils to rely, like himself, upon experience only.

His claims, exaggerated no doubt but largely justifiable, were granted the more readily on account of his marvellous healing power—whether due to what would now be called skill in diagnosis, combined with the use of "natural" methods, or to the working through him of some strange and scarcely controllable force, it would be hard to decide.

Paracelsus' fame and popularity at Basel lasted for about two years. But he was not born for peace. His attacks upon vested interests—especially those of the physicians and apothecaries, whose honesty and learning he impugned—brought him as their inevitable consequence the hostility and malice of many small minds, and serious opposition to the lecturer's teaching arose in the city. He was accused of profanity, of debauchery, of necromancy, of drunkenness, his servant Oporinus being amongst those who witnessed against him; his services to science, his miracles of healing, were forgotten by the fickle

the time-honoured use of the Latin language. . . . This daring act was the beginning of free thought in science, and the old belief in authorities began to weaken" (F. Hartmann, *Life of Paracelsus*). *Cf.* the bold use of their native tongues by Dante and Milton.

mob which had applauded him before; and finally, the Liechtenfels affair—in which a certain canon whom Paracelsus had saved from death refused to pay his fee, and was supported by the authorities—compelled him to leave the ungrateful city in actual danger of his life.

His subsequent wanderings, made wretched by want and perhaps also by the bitterness of failure, extended over twelve years, and carried him in turn to Esslingen, Colmar, Nuremburg, S. Gall, Zurich, Pfeffers, Augsburg, Moravia, Vienna, Villach, and Mindelheim. At some of these places he was denounced and persecuted as an impostor by the resident physicians; but his power to effect marvellous cures seems to have suffered no diminution, and he often treated his poorer patients without asking any fee.

In 1541 he journeyed to Salzburg, invited thither by Duke Ernst of Bavaria, an earnest student of occultism. There he might have enjoyed peace and fame had not his life been cut short on September 24th, after a short illness, due, as some say, to a blow on the head treacherously given at a banquet. It is certain that the skull of the corpse was afterwards found to have been fractured during life.

Paracelsus' body, buried at first in the churchyard, was in 1572 removed to the porch, and a monument erected over it. Tradition tells of his maintaining an earthly existence in the astral body, and appearing at various times to his followers and disciples.

So much for facts. But to read the character of Paracelsus aright more than mere fact is necessary.

We must reconstruct for ourselves what Dr. Berdoe calls the "glacial period" of European thought, when Aristotle, converted to Christianity and disguised as a monk, dominated the imagination of the philosophical and scientific world, and the human intellect was enthralled by a convention which lay upon it

> "with a weight
> Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life."

The treatment accorded to thinkers who tried to free themselves from this thraldom—men such as Pietro of Abano, Giordano Bruno, and Copernicus—forms the best commentary upon the narrowness and intolerance of that dark and frozen age.

Coleridge suggests in *Table Talk* that every man is born either an Aristotelian or a Platonist, and if this be the case the latter fifteenth century must have seen a larger influx of "Platonic" souls than had inhabited Europe for some time previously. The Renaissance began to be apparent from the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and a wonderfully rapid melting of the ice-fetters followed.

Each new discovery, whether of printing, gunpowder, the planetary system, or the new continent, contributed its quota of freedom. Luther was born in 1483; Paracelsus, ten years younger, has been nicknamed "Luther alter," since he did for science the same emancipating work which his great contemporary accomplished for religion.

Like all the typical reformers of his age, he cherished a spirit of illimitable desire. In his case, as with Faustus, that desire took an intellectual form, the quest of knowledge absolute. In such a quest

the seeker finds himself face to face with many of the powers of darkness, and a "high failure" is perhaps the most that he can attain to unprepared. Paracelsus, be it granted, was not always blameless in his immediate aims and methods. The imperfection of the human instrument marred the music of his life, consecrated as it was by

> "such vows as is a shame
> A man should not be bound by, yet the which
> No man can keep."

At times his lofty ideal gave way to human ambition; at times the adulation of disciples, or the contempt of hostile critics, disturbed the balance of mind necessary in all who would attain; at times, again, the path of the Initiate seemed too solitary, and the lower nature, revolting against the austerity of the higher, claimed its meed of satisfaction. Angels might weep to see a drunken Paracelsus![1]

But "the objects of sense turn away from an abstemious dweller in the body"—one whose con-

[1] The charge of drunkenness brought against Paracelsus by Oporinus and others is hard either to substantiate or to refute. Arnold (*History of Churches and Heretics*, vol. ii. ch. xxii.) considers it "disproved by the fact that a man who is a glutton and drunkard could not have been in possession of such divine gifts." This is a doubtful argument; but the amount of Paracelsus' literary production during a period of fifteen years seems to show that at least he cannot have been in a state of continual intoxication, as his enemies aver. The charge of boastfulness may be more confidently dismissed. There is no personal conceit in the high-pitched utterances of Paracelsus; but there is the consciousness of a divine vocation, realised and welcomed. The language of inspiration is often, to the casual hearer, indistinguishable from the language of folly.

sciousness has been habitually focussed beyond the world of sense, thereby weakening its hold upon him—and his descents into physical indulgence leave him dissatisfied:

> "For never sordid lusts that move,
> Nor dreams that light, the house of clay,
> Fires of the hearth, nor breasts of love,
> Can give the Immortal Pilgrim stay."

So it was with Paracelsus: and there is every reason to believe that he returned again and again, after temporary discouragement, to the pursuit of his first ideal.

Meantime, on the level of practical discovery he accomplished much, sweeping away the rubbish of past ages, and winning for himself the proud title of "father of modern chemistry." Whereas before he lived science, and especially medical science, had made no perceptible progress for centuries, the ban of the Church being laid upon all who prosecuted independent research, Paracelsus, both in his lectures and in his practice, overstepped the boundary which divides the mediæval from the modern world. He discarded superstitious ceremonial in favour of common sense; he went to Nature rather than to the schoolmen for his teaching; he saw the sphere of chemical action to be far wider than he had hitherto supposed, applying chemistry for the first time to human physiology and pathology, and introducing into medicine the use of chemical compounds drawn from metals: and he discovered, not only zinc and hydrogen, but also laudanum, one of the greatest boons to suffering man.

His medical theories were closely interwoven with

his occult philosophy concerning the relation of man to the universe; he believed in the dependence of the human body on external Nature, of the Microcosm, or little cosmos of man, on the Macrocosm, or great cosmos. Indeed, his followers, who idolised him,[1] often found that even his apparently medical prescriptions were not meant to be understood literally, but were "blinds" embodying and concealing profounder secrets concerning the One Life; and this is still more the case with his alchemical writings.[2]

On this subject it is needful to speak a little further, for of the numerous treatises attributed to Paracelsus (written originally in Swiss-German, but translated into Latin during the sixteenth century)

[1] Among these followers are Benedictus Figulus, Adam von Bodenstein, Alexander von Suchten, Gerhard Dorn, Bernhard Thurneyssen, Peter Severinus, Martin Ruland, Oswald Crall, Melchior Schennemann, and Eliphas Levi. Dorn, Thurneyssen, and Ruland compiled glossaries of the special terms used by Paracelsus, and a modern adaptation of these is included by F. Hartmann in his *Life of Paracelsus*.

[2] Much of our knowledge of Paracelsus is derived from Eliphas Levi's' *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, and *Histoire de la Magie* (1810 (?)–1875). Levi (whose real name was Alphonse Louis Constant) calls him "that reformer in magic who has surpassed all other initiates by his unassisted practical success . . . the most sublime of the Christian magi . . . a man of inspiration and miracles, but who exhausted his life with his devouring activity." Again, "He was more attentive to physical results than to moral conquests; hence he was the first of practical magicians and the last of wise adepts. . . . He has divined more than any one, without ever completely understanding anything. He may be called the divine Paracelsus, if the term be understood in the sense of a diviner; he is an oracle, but not invariably a true master." (See Preface to *Alchemical and Hermetic Works of Paracelsus*, edited by A. E. Waite.)

nearly all are based upon the same underlying idea of the essential unity of things.[1]

We know that Paracelsus read little; according to his own statement, he passed ten years without perusing a single book, and his disciples declare that he dictated his works to them without using any manuscripts or memoranda. His library is said to have consisted of the Bible, S. Jerome on the Gospels, a concordance, a medical treatise, and a few MSS. But whether through oral and written teaching or by some more secret method, he became thoroughly versed in the doctrines of Plato and of the Jewish Kabbalah, no less than in those of the more ancient Eastern Scriptures,[2] and was confident that these doctrines,

[1] The number of Paracelsus' genuine works is a matter of dispute. Few were printed during his lifetime, and of those subsequently issued under his name it is probable that many, although embodying his essential teaching, came from the pens of disciples, and not from the master himself—a confusion well known to all students of mediæval art and literature. Marx admits only ten works as genuine; Haeser, who collected and edited them about 1590, seventeen, classifying another twenty-four as doubtful, and all the rest as spurious. Mook disagrees with both, but does not make his own view clear, and gives a very incomplete list of editions.

Haeser's edition, which contains a portrait of Paracelsus, is in German, but most of the succeeding ones are in Latin. Mr. A. E. Waite's English edition of 1894, with introduction and notes, a most useful book, does not profess to contain more than the Hermetic and Alchemical works, taken from the Genevan Latin folio of 1658. The rest remain for the most part untranslated into English. On all this, *cf.* F. Hartmann's interesting *Life of Paracelsus*, containing many extracts from his writings. The list of works given by Hartmann is, however, absolutely uncritical.

[2] "The information given by Paracelsus in regard to the sevenfold principles of man, the qualities of the astral body, the

"looked upon as superstition in one century, would be the basis for the approved science of the next"; a prophecy of which we are only now, in this twentieth century, beginning to see the fulfilment.[1]

His own experiments in chemistry, natural history, and pharmacy harmonised with the philosophy thus imbibed (*pace* the author of the article on *Paracelsus* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*), and there resulted that curious blend of the practical and the mystic which gives its distinctive note to the teaching of this great thinker, and explains the almost incalculable stimulus which he communicated to outworn method and theory.

Paracelsus boldly defines magic as "the highest power of the human spirit to control all lower influences for the purpose of good," and alchemy is to him the development of the hidden possibilities and virtues latent in any substance. Like Plato,[2] Plotinus, the Kabbalists, and the Vedantists, he regards the material universe as the projected thought of the Eternal Mind, calling it "the visible body of

earth-bound elementaries, &c., was [in his time] entirely unknown in the West; but this information is almost the same as that given in *Isis Unveiled* [by H. P. B.], *Esoteric Buddhism* [by A. Sinnett], and other books recently published, and declared to have been given by some Eastern adepts." (F. Hartmann, *Life of Paracelsus.*) Browning has made liberal use of this resemblance between the Paracelsian philosophy and Eastern thought in many parts of his poem, and some knowledge of the Vedantin philosophy, in particular, will render the latter far more intelligible.

[1] *Cf. The Science of To-Morrow and Mediæval Mysticism*, by Mrs. Cunninghame-Graham.

[2] *Cf.* especially the *Timæus* of Plato and the *Emerides* of Plotinus.

the invisible God." This manifested universe, or Macrocosm, is passing through a vast evolutionary process, corresponding to that which takes place in the Microcosm, or little world of man.[1]

Hence the sympathy between them, a sympathy upon which the practice of the healing art must of necessity be based. There is no such thing as dead matter; all matter is informed by an in-dwelling mind, an intelligent force, or, in the Paracelsian phrase, a "Universal Solvent," which pervades and saturates everything. Disease and death are but obscure phases of this living force, the knowledge of which, called the "supreme secret of Alchemy," is said to have been taught to Paracelsus by an Arabian. The occult doctrine of the "signatures" of plants, &c., held by Paracelsus, is an outcome of these views. It implies a universal symbolism, in which, too, the mysteries of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of

[1] *Cf.* Francis Thompson's fine expression of this truth in *The Night of Forebeing*:—

"My little-worlded self! the shadows pass
In this thy sister-world, as in a glass,
Of all processions that revolve in thee;
Not only of cyclic Man
Thou here discern'st the plan,
Not only of cyclic Man, but of the cyclic Me.
Not solely of Mortality's great years
The reflex just appears,
But thine own bosom's year, still circling round
In ample and in ampler gyre
Toward the far completion, wherewith crowned
Love unconsumed shall chant in his own furnace-fire.
How many trampled and deciduous joys
Enrich thy soul for joys deciduous still,
Before the distance shall fulfil
Cyclic unrest with solemn equipoise!"

Life, outward signs denoting hidden realities, play an important part.

In man himself Paracelsus recognises seven principles through which the one life is manifested:[1] "The external man," he says, "is not the real man; but the real man is the soul in connection with the divine spirit."

Of Evil he takes the view held by the Kabbalists, Maimonides, Spinoza, Hegel, and Leibnitz, and often expressed by Emerson; *i.e.*, that it is a negative and not a positive quality, the absence or incompleteness of our recognition of Good, instead of an opposing force more or less commensurate with it. This is the transcendental optimism, according to which the conquest of Evil by Good, and the ceaseless unfoldment of the divine life in Macrocosm and Microcosm, is a foregone conclusion.

Paracelsus, whatever may have been his faults and limitations as a man, was undoubtedly one of those to whom is committed from time to time throughout the ages the ancient wisdom-tradition around which all cosmogonies, theogonies, and mysteries cling; the tradition which shines through the mystic lore of the Egyptians, the numbers of Pythagoras, the philosophies of Plato and Plotinus, the Oracles of Zoroaster, the cryptic text of the Kabbalah, the system of the Vedantists, the Gnosis of Origen, Clement, and Dionysius the Areopagite, the occult science of the Rosicrucians, and the saintly ecstasies of Thomas à Kempis, Theresa, and John of the Cross. And it may be that when Science begins to harmonise her fresh rediscoveries of ether, electron, and mysterious ray with the synthetic law—when she

[1] *Cf.* A. Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man.*

realises that particulars can be solved only by universals—when, in fine, the study of physics and the study of metaphysics are no longer two, but one, as in the olden time—then, the teachings of Paracelsus and many another forgotten seeker after truth will shine forth as stars in a firmament that has long been dark.[1]

[1] Every student attracted by the occult Paracelsian teaching concerning God, Man, and Nature should carefully read the third chapter of F. Hartmann's *Life of Paracelsus*, entitled "Cosmology." Most interesting results may be obtained from a comparison of that teaching with the theories advanced in some of Sir Oliver Lodge's recent books, and with those of A. Besant in *Occult Chemistry* and *The Evolution of Life and Form*.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER FIGURES IN THE POEM

I

THE three minor characters in the Paracelsian drama are all in some respect foils to the central figure; yet each is most clearly and, with one or two possible exceptions, consistently portrayed.

Festus may be a sketch of Browning's father in certain of his aspects, and especially in his relation to the young, ardent friend whose transcendental enthusiasm he is at times apt to distrust. It was the function of the elder Browning to pour an occasional douche of cold water upon the schemes of the younger, while yet he showed his faith in him by generously financing his work. Perhaps some of the admonitory speeches of Festus reproduce harangues delivered by him on such occasions. But this is conjecture merely.

Festus, whether drawn from the life or not, is very lifelike in his attributes. We see him as a grave priest (iii. 868) some years older than Paracelsus (i. 233), his friend and guide from boyhood (i. 120, 154–5); a man steady and constant in loyalty, but

of unready speech, and often unable to express his deepest thoughts and feelings (i. 222, 381).

Contrast with Paracelsus throws him on all points into the shade. Beside Paracelsus' enthusiasm he appears over-cautious, conventional, and bound by tradition. At times his dispassionate logic has a singularly prosaic and relentless quality, as when he says of the great seekers of the past, who yet have failed to reform the world—

> "You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
> But they were famous in their day—the proofs
> Remain."

Festus, however, is no Pharisee. He recognises his own lack of the higher forms of imagination, and laments it; and never once, for all his gentle chiding, does he cease to regard Paracelsus as a being infinitely superior to himself, one "elect" indeed:—

> "You are endowed with faculties which bear
> Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
> To summon meaner spirits to do their will
> And gather round them at their need; inspiring
> Such with a love themselves can never feel,
> Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
>
> . . . .
>
> I dare not judge you;
> The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
> There's no alternative—I own you one
> Of higher order, under other laws
> Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!
> 'Tis best aspire."

Here Festus grasps the whole spirit of discipleship;

but, in the main, his attitude throughout Book I is that of a humble yet independent follower, who, like the doubting Thomas, yearns for further assurance of what he would fain believe.

He reappears in Book III at Paracelsus' house in Basel, and here it seems to me that a certain loss of energy and decision is perceptible; that in such passages as iii. 105–8 he shows less of the old simple dignity, and even becomes a trifle abject. Strangely combined with this tendency is a new tone with regard to Paracelsus, whose attitude bewilders and troubles him, goading him at last into an expression of downright dissatisfaction in iii. 496–9.

Simple loyalty and common sense, striving to reconcile the aspirations of its idol with its own narrower code of duty, may well feel injured by the defection of that idol into devious and doubtful paths such as it cannot but condemn.

But we do not part with Festus in this mood. The meeting at Colmar in Book IV finds him at his noblest; heartbroken over the loss of Michal, but ready to put personal feeling wholly aside and throw himself heart and soul into the interests of his friend. He grows stronger, too, as Paracelsus seems to waver, and reproves his wild talk with authority and dignity. As the interview goes on Paracelsus, in deference to this dignity, drops his assumed tone of bitter sarcasm and becomes candid at last:—

> "I am very glad
> You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you
> Can see the root of the matter! . . .
> . . . You are no stupid dupe:
> You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you
> To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus."

Festus' reply, if couched in rather dogmatic terms, shows real insight, and is based upon a fundamentally right view:—

> "These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,
> Or wherefore this disorder? . . .
> These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee":

and Paracelsus, though instantly detecting the dogmatism, can now lay himself open before this faithful friend, and value his loyalty at its true worth (iv. 369–76). It is to his best self, after all, that the simple Festus appeals, whether he fully understand the situation or not. Perhaps pure whimsicality makes Paracelsus proceed to the somewhat hopeless task of trying to enlighten him by means of a beautiful but obscure allegory (450–522), with the sole effect of alarming Festus, who, only half comprehensive, urges a renouncement of past and future hopes and a return to the peace of Einsiedeln.

Again the misunderstanding makes itself felt:—

> *Par.* "No, no; those lusts forbid;
> . . . . .
> No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
> If you knew how a devil sneers within me
> While you are talking now of this, now that,
> As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!"

But once more Festus, recovering from his bewilderment, "catches a light," and speaks with emphasis and conviction of Paracelsus' fall into selfish discontent. He strikes a high note, holds the balance justly, when he says:—

"Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed you much,
And you have left your first love, and retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
And who shall call your course without reward?"

and again when, in reply to Paracelsus' question,

"Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?"

he answers:—

"No, dear Aureole!
. . . Even I can see
You own some higher law than ours, which call
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength.
But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me; and I blame you where they bid,
Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul; the more, that sorrow
Has fallen on me of late."

The scene ends with the infinitely pathetic breaking to Paracelsus by Festus of the news of Michal's death.

Book V opens with Festus' soliloquy by the sick-bed of the unconscious Paracelsus; a simple outpouring of devotion to the "poor glorious spirit" now so stricken, mingled with a child like confidence in the fatherly care of God for both. He actually develops dramatic skill in his friend's service, feigning to be Erasmus, or a student come to demand help and teaching; but in vain. Paracelsus is unconscious of any presence save Aprile's, and Festus can only

listen in patience to the torrent of incoherent talk.

> "A light
> Will struggle through these thronging words at last.
> . . . . . .
> Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!"

The darkness lifts before the end, and Festus once more appeals for recognition, and wins it by the simple human plea of an unendurable loneliness.

> "Have you no thought, no memory for me,
> Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
> Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
> And even you forget me."

It is then that his hour comes. Repeating the note of i. 694-9, but with more certainty, he hails Paracelsus as master, and dares to claim a place at his side by virtue of the strength of his devotion.

> "Thou hast infused
> Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,
> Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
> Thou so august."

Passing from the rôle of disciple to that of tender nurse, Festus now soothes Paracelsus by the repetition of a simple poem, and with quiet questioning helps him to regain full consciousness. Perhaps it is the willing gift of his vitality that strengthens Paracelsus for the apotheosis of the final scene. Festus describes in 527-37 the marvellous change which comes over the dying man; and though he shows one more characteristic misapprehension in the

lines which immediately follow, he is privileged to be the sole listener to that great last lecture which Paracelsus, robed and armed, delivers in the hospital cell.

When it is finished, Paracelsus dies with his hand in the hand of Festus, and the faithful soul is left alone with its memories.

II

Michal is, if we except the somewhat shadowy figure of Pauline, Browning's first woman, and she is the characteristic product of a mind which, with all its robust virility, has been described by one who knew Browning well as "virgin-pure." The same may, indeed, be said of all his great heroines—of Pippa, Balaustion, and Pompilia; among whom Pompilia most resembles Michal, in the way that a finished portrait resembles a delicate pencil sketch.

It is interesting to notice that Browning's idealism with regard to women was an inborn quality, and not merely the result of the beatitude which love brought him eleven years after the writing of *Paracelsus*. At this time he knew hardly any women save his mother and sister, but the instinct of reverence and devotion to womanhood was already strong.

Michal speaks little in the poem—less than twenty lines in all—but, like Shakspere's Cordelia, she is, for all her silence and gentleness, a strangely dominant and haunting figure, to whom

> "all male minds perforce
> Swayed . . . from their orbits as they moved
> And girdled her with music." [1]

[1] Tennyson, *The Princess*.

As with Cordelia, too, the passion of love plays no part in her brief story: the keynote of her life is a passionless devotion to those who claim her sympathy.

The first thing we are told about her is that she has the power of seeing the best in life, and overlooking disagreeables; a moment after, our attention is called to her childlike tears over the departure of Paracelsus, and to the smile that follows them as she responds to his words of comfort. That she is simple and not clever—a Pompilia rather than a Balaustion—is proved by her trustful dependence on her husband, and the naïve spontaneity of her talk. But, like many a simple saintly woman, she has the gift of intuitive perception in a very high degree. It is this that makes her bid Festus cease from opposing Paracelsus when he claims to be God-guided—

> "Vex him no further, Festus!"

although she herself foresees more clearly than her husband the ending of his quest, and cries with prophetic insight—

> "You will find all you seek, and perish so."

But the failure of which she speaks is an earthly failure only; one that "overleaps the bounds of low success." Hence, despite her momentary quailing before the vision of the future, she can cheer the seeker on his way, and to his final question,

> "Do you believe I shall accomplish this?"

can reply, not with Festus' half-hesitating "I do

believe," but with the phrase of triumphant conviction,

"I ever did believe!"

Michal's spell over Paracelsus is the spell often wielded by one following the Path of Devotion upon another who treads the more tortuous Path of Knowledge. Her simple saintliness is like a cooling fountain to his proud, ardent, heated spirit.

Festus misunderstands Paracelsus' attitude (though without a touch of jealousy) when he says to him on the last night before his departure—

"While you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seemed to love,"

for he fails to realise that love for such a woman as Michal is a magnet drawing a man, not to the woman herself, but to that ideal of which her beauty and holiness is a partial manifestation.

After the first Book Michal never reappears, but she is constantly in the thoughts of both men. They talk of her in Paracelsus' chamber at Basel, five years later, and it is then that Paracelsus gives us two glimpses of her bodily beauty—of the dreaming violet eyes, and the face which radiates a

"quiet and peculiar light,
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl."

Only the thought of her children disturbs the "pure picture" in his mind:—

"A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct.
No change, no change! Not but this added grace

May blend and harmonise with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since."

But Michal the mother is still "proud" of her friend, and weaves day-dreams round his memory.

Two years later, Festus visits that friend again, this time at Colmar, and the self-absorption of the now fallen Paracelsus is shown in his forgetfulness of Michal during the long conversation which ensues. At last he recalls her:—

Par. "Have you felt sorrow, Festus? 'tis because
You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!
Well thought on; never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all; these miscreants dared
Insult me—me she loved; so, grieve her not!"
Fes. "Your ill success can little grieve her now."
Par. "Michal is dead! pray Christ we do not craze!"

The scene is paralleled by Brutus' stern but simple communication of the news of Portia's death to the angry Cassius. But here the pathos is deepened by the spiritual bond which unites the woman to her husband's friend.

Only one or two slight references to Michal occur in the great last Book. Festus longs for her help to soothe Paracelsus' delirium, and when Paracelsus regains consciousness he fancies her to be present, as who dare say she is not? But when the wind of the Spirit sweeps through the narrow cell, and the inspired seeker after Truth sees the vision that has eluded him so long, there is no room even for Michal, nor would she have wished to be remembered in such an

hour. She has helped to lead Paracelsus to the light: her task is done.

III

Aprile is a creature of air and fire, not of flesh and blood, and as such so far removed from the great majority of Browning's creations as to make us feel that the clue to his personality may lie in the world of allegory and symbolism.

What does Aprile, the half-crazed lover of love, signify or represent? Is he an idealisation of Shelley, the "Sun-treader" of Browning's lately-written *Pauline*? The pageant of his visions might well apply to Shelley's work; Shelley, too, had he lived, might have both loved and known, uniting the ideal of Aprile with that of Paracelsus.[1]

Or, does Aprile typify the emotional, sensuous, beauty-loving Renaissance of Italy, in contrast to the sterner scientific Renaissance of Germany, represented, perhaps, by Paracelsus—a contrast illustrated by comparison of *A Grammarian's Funeral* with *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at S. Praxed's*? And is the comparative failure of both to accomplish their aims symbolised by the imperfect attainment of scientist and poet? There is much to commend this view—notably the resemblance which Aprile bears to some of the characteristic figures of fifteenth-century Italy, such as the beautiful, fascinating, and gifted Lorenzo dei Medici.

But these speculations, however attractive, will not carry us far. Browning deals little in personal allegory, and even if Aprile may be regarded as a semi-allegorical figure, the fact remains that he owes

[1] *Cf.* also Browning's *Essay on Shelley*.

his chief importance to the part which he plays in the drama of Paracelsus' quest. What, then, is this part?

Aprile resembles Michal in appearing in one Book only—the Second—and in colouring much of the thought of another Book—the Fifth. On his first introduction to Paracelsus each thinks the other his predestined successor. Paracelsus' illusion is soon dispelled, and finding Aprile no "sage," he plunges into the opposite error, and describes him contemptuously as "some moon-struck creature after all." Aprile, more humble, confesses the failure of his life, and attributes it to the infinitude of his unrestrained desire for love. Then he describes his methods; he would employ the arts of painting, sculpture, oratory, music, in the service of love. How, he asks, has Paracelsus succeeded while he has failed?

The unconscious irony of the question reveals to Paracelsus one of the two mistakes which have impeded his own quest. He, the Occultist, has hitherto sought Knowledge rather than Love; he has striven to attain by means of a faculty developed in isolation, and since co-operation between all man's faculties and powers is a necessity of growth, it is no wonder that his search has proved itself vain. The meeting with Aprile, the Mystic, brings to him a sudden awakening of his own higher potentialities, a conscious realisation of Love as the main principle of life.[1]

[1] The distinction between the Occultist and the Mystic has been thus explained: the former seeks to know Consciousness by studying the matter in which Consciousness works; the latter seeks to know Consciousness only:—the former gains

Aprile's humble generosity, as he rejoices in the assumed success of Paracelsus, calls forth an equally humble and generous confession—

> "Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
> To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!
> . . . . . .
> I too have sought to Know as thou to Love—
> Excluding Love as thou refusedst Knowledge.
> . . . . . .

---

knowledge by experiment, and by interaction with all the various forms of manifestation; the latter by using the emotional, almost to the exclusion of the mental, faculty. "The goal of both is the same; for spirit and matter are but two facets of one whole,"—and Mystic and Occultist alike arrive at the ultimate knowledge of the One Life immanent in all forms. But while the Occultist remains in conscious possession of the links or stages by which he has reached his present position, and can at any moment re-create and revivify them for the benefit of his fellow-men, the Mystic is unaware of *how* he has attained to the higher states of consciousness, and in giving his message to others is dependent on their receptivity, and must cry—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The Occultist therefore is the better fitted to help and teach humanity, using definite means to an assured end.

On the whole, this distinction is illustrated by the characters of Paracelsus and Aprile, though the contrast must not be emphasised too much. Paracelsus, travel-worn and disillusioned as he is at the time of their meeting, is ready for the dawn of that inner light which shall crown Knowledge with Love and so transform it into Wisdom. Aprile, dazed and half-blinded by long gazing on that same light, fain to dwell for ever on the Mount of Transfiguration, comes forth into the world of men "God-intoxicated," and incapable of doing more than communicate his message once, and die; while Paracelsus, striving amid the clash of contending forces to give his new-found treasure to the world, attains in the end to what is, perhaps, the higher apotheosis.

Die not, Aprile! We must never part.
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part? Never!
Till thou, the Lover, know; and I, the Knower,
Love—until both are saved."

So far good; but there is a further mistake, as yet unrealised by Paracelsus, but hinted at by Aprile in 388, &c. The Seeker, whether along the Path of Love or the Path of Knowledge, must unite submission with aspiration; must plant his footsteps firmly on the earth even while looking heavenward; otherwise he becomes a visionary unfit for human uses, and—

> "His chair desires him here in vain,
> However they may crown him otherwhere."[1]

Infinite Love, infinite Knowledge, are not to be the portion of the pilgrim until he enters the Celestial City.

> "God's gift was that man should conceive of Truth
> And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake
> As midway help till he reach fact indeed."[2]

This is an idea often emphasised by Browning, and nowhere more clearly than in the story of Paracelsus.

Meanwhile, Aprile goes out like foam on the fountain, united to Paracelsus by his devotion only, and regarding him to the last as his chosen successor. But the impression which he has made is one not easily effaced. There are constant appeals to him

[1] Tennyson, *The Holy Grail.*
[2] *A Death in the Desert*, 605 *et seq.*

during the delirium in the Salzburg Hospital, where the dying Paracelsus seems to be re-enacting the scene at Constantinople, and discussing once more the relative values of Knowledge and Love. Indeed, his absorption with the invisible speaker is so intense as to draw from Festus a pathetic plea for recognition.

During the great pæan of conscious triumph which opens at line 600, Aprile, like Michal, drops out of remembrance; but afterwards it is he, or the thing he symbolises, that inspires the last words of Paracelsus, and with the name of the Lover on his lips the Knower passes into Knowledge.

CHAPTER V

BROWNING'S PHILOSOPHY

TO sum up the main features of Browning's thought in a single chapter is a difficult task, and yet perhaps not so impossible as it at first appears.

A story is told of Tennyson, that in reply to a question as to what his politics were, he said, "I am of the same politics as Shakspere, Bacon, and every sane man." The answer showed true insight. In spite of the limitations incidental to every system of belief, every formulated opinion, we all feel (unless we deliberately choose to remain on the surface of things) that the seekers after Truth think alike, whether they know it or not, and however differently their thoughts may be clothed. The unity which underlies diversity is nowhere more remarkable than in this curious approximation of great minds to each other.[1]

True, even the greatest, as soon as they begin to analyse and define, are apt to lose the sense of their own unity, and to wander into blind alleys of dogmatism and formal dispute. Tennyson, with his insular Conservatism, was very far from realising in practice

[1] *Cf.* an article on *The Fundamental Agreement underlying Philosophies*, *Journal of Philosophy*, March 18, 1909.

his own ideal of a political concept shared by "Shakspere, Bacon, and every sane man." Yet he was right in seeing that such a unifying concept—underlying all differences of nation, party, and individual—does exist, and always has existed.

So it is with other spheres of thought. If asked what are Browning's views as a philosopher, I feel inclined to answer, "He is of the same philosophy as Plato, Plotinus, Aristotle, Hegel, Spinoza, and every sane man"—and that in spite of the apparent absurdity of linking together names that are usually, and to some extent rightly, taken to represent opposite and irreconcilable systems, such as those of Plato and Aristotle. If this be a true statement, its truth must be based upon the fact that Browning is one of a band of seers to whom some glimpse of the divine wisdom has been vouchsafed, and who, by virtue of that wisdom, are "sane," where others, who see by the light of human reason alone, must inevitably err. He has, like Wordsworth, a definite philosophy of life, and, as with Wordsworth, that philosophy is mainly intuitive—the result of inward knowledge, not of any laborious mental process. Hence we find it as complete in *Paracelsus*, written at the age of twenty-three, as in *Reverie*, written shortly before the poet's death at the age of seventy-seven.

At this point Browning and Wordsworth, the two greatest of our poet-philosophers, part company. One of the most remarkable points about Browning is that he—philosopher, poet, and mystic—was also so essentially a man of the world, a man of keen intellect, balanced judgment, and widely-varied human interests. His work has something of the Shaksperian adaptability and width of range; he

sees the facts of life "in the round," and yet can limit himself at will to definite points of view "strictly finite and mundane."

Lord Rosebery once declared that the mystic who is also a man of action and of practical ability is one of the strongest forces it is possible to find in human life. True, indeed; but how rare is the combination! We find it in Plato, in S. Paul, in Shakspere, and in Browning. In Wordsworth, and many another great poet, we fail to find it; their mystic philosophy draws them away from the world of men.

It is not hard to discover the central point of Browning's philosophy—a point so essential, so universally present in all great systems of thought, so inevitably characteristic of all the profoundest thinkers, that it may well be considered as the material out of which thought is made, rather than thought itself. It is the recognition of what theologians call the doctrine of Divine Immanence. Browning, a characteristically modern thinker, naturally emphasises this idea, because, like all the men of his generation, he was born into a world in which the seemingly antithetical but really complementary idea of Divine Transcendence had become a kind of fetish, and had developed into the conception of a Supreme Being so entirely out of relation with the world as to be practically unknown and unknowable.[1]

[1] At this moment the reactionary tendency to exalt the Immanence and leave out of sight Transcendence of the Divine Life is being felt. The combination of the two ideas is, as a modern theologian points out, peculiarly hard to maintain: —"it is difficult to unify our conceptions of a God without and

That he does not sink to the "Lower Pantheism" and regard God as identical with and submerged in His universe is abundantly evident from a study of such passages as *Christmas Eve*, v. xvii., *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, 573 *et seq.*, 590 *et seq.*, *Reverie*, ver. 32, and *Prologue to Asolando*, ver. 9. All these imply a God transcendent, the God who reveals Himself to the young prince Arjuna in the words—"Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful, and mighty, understand thou that to go forth from a fragment of my splendour. . . . Having pervaded this whole universe with one fragment of myself, I remain." (*Bhagavad Gitâ*, x. 42.)[1]

But it is in speaking of the Immanence that Browning soars highest, for here he brings a new message to his generation. How is that message conveyed?

A friend once asked Browning whether he cared much for Nature. The reply was "Yes, a great deal; but for human beings a great deal more." Hence we find that it is the divinity in Man which most

a God within—a difficulty arising partly from use of the unsatisfactory metaphor of space" (article on *Divine Immanence*, *Church Quarterly Review*, October, 1908). Eastern thought and literature preserve the balance better than the Western, owing to their more metaphysical and less dogmatic and materialising tendencies (*cf.* the magnificent conception of the Day and Night of Brahm, paralleled, however, by Psalms civ. 29–30, and cii. 26).

[1] Emily Brontë's last verses are an equally noble expression of the same thought :—

> "Though earth and man were gone,
> And suns and universes ceased to be,
> And Thou wert left alone,
> Every existence would exist in Thee."

appeals to him. He is the Wordsworth of human nature.

Belief in the limitless potentialities of mankind underlies all Browning's poetry, and is the root of his incurable optimism: an optimism not expressed most typically in the often-quoted words—

> "God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world,"

to which Transcendence rather than Immanence provides the clue, but more clearly in lines embodying the thought that "the Kingdom of God is within you." This point may be proved by a comparison of *Saul*, xvii., *Ferishtah's Fancies* ("Fire is in the flint"), *Any Wife to any Husband*, iv., *Apparent Failure*, vii., and a score at least of other passages.

But we must go further. The divinity of Man, in spite of its blessed reality, is as yet potential rather than actual—the reason why it has been forgotten by many and denied by some. Browning recognises this, and in his explanation of the fact we reach what may be called the circumference of his philosophy, belief in Divine Immanence being its core and centre. He grasped, intuitively and at a very early age, the great principle of Evolution as the law of Being, and it is in *Paracelsus*, as we shall see later, that this principle is most emphatically asserted (*cf.* also, among other statements of it, *A Death in the Desert*, 542 *et seq.*, 582–607, and *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, 1,012 *et seq.*). Browning often interweaves with this treatment of Evolution the thought, specially characteristic of his robust optimism, that

our very imperfections and limitations—nay, Sorrow and Evil in their most harrowing and repulsive forms—are signs and tokens of a perfection towards which we are daily approaching.[1] He agrees with Paracelsus and the Hegelians in his view concerning the nature of Evil (*cf. A Bean Stripe*, 200, *Count Gismond*, xii., *The Ring and the Book*, x. 1,375 *et seq.*, *Francis Furini*, x.). Nor is he anxious that the great evolutionary process should be curtailed (*cf. A Grammarian's Funeral*, 97 *et seq.*), since

> "What's come to perfection, perishes"

(*Old Pictures in Florence*, xvii.).

A hard saying, this, but entirely true of life conditioned by manifestation, spirit enshrined and imprisoned in form.

The splendid optimism which asserts that only by means of such temporary (though æonian) limitation does Man fulfil his infinite destiny is not, of course, peculiar to Browning. Parallels to it may be found in Goethe's doctrine of "Entbehrung," and in Schiller's statement—

> "Nur der Irrtum ist das Leben,
> Und das Wissen ist der Tod."

Plotinus, too, points out that limitation is a quality of the divine nature, since it is only through limitation that the One can become manifest.

A striking modern expression of the idea that our trust in ceaseless progress can actually be based upon

[1] M. Arnold denies the validity of this argument in the soliloquy of Empedocles (*Empedocles on Etna*, ver. 55).

our consciousness of present failure occurs in Professor Royce's Ingersoll Lecture of 1906 on *The Conception of Immortality*. "The incompleteness of your present self-expression of your own meaning is the sole warrant that you have for asserting that there is a world beyond you. . . . You rightly demand that Reality should adequately express your whole, true meaning."[1] Browning argues to the same effect in *Cleon* and in *Rephan*, and he sums up his conclusion in a single often-quoted line of that supremely mystical poem, *Abt Vogler* :—

"On the earth, the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfec round."

It would be idle to demonstrate in detail how Browning applies his two main conceptions—Divine Immanence and Evolution—to the unravelling of the problems of life. That he does so apply them, with deliberation and consistency, is a fact which every student of his work must recognise.

In Browning's philosophy, Man, like water, is always striving to return to his own level—to re-enter "that eternal palace whence he came"; and the palace is within him. Till he finds it, he is

[1] *Cf.* a passage quoted (not perhaps with the writer's approbation) by W. H. Mallock, *An Immortal Soul*: "Science . . . tells us . . . that there is no desire implanted in any living creature which does not indicate the existence somewhere of that wherewithal it shall be satisfied. . . . So it is with the soul. . . . If thy soul desire something which it has not yet found, know then that somewhere this thing desired exists, and if believing that thou hast found it, thou wouldst know whether thou hast found it truly, examine thy heart afresh, and ask whether thy heart is satisfied."

a homeless pilgrim, yet knows himself "unborn, undying, constant, changeless, eternal."

> "Then Life is—to wake, not sleep,
> Rise and not rest, but press
> From earth's level, where blindly creep
> Things perfected more or less,
> To the heaven's height, far and steep."
> (*Reverie*, xli.)

But here a question arises. How is the pressing forward to be accomplished, the great process to be quickened? How is Man to bring about, by conscious co-operation, the subdual of matter to spirit —spoken of by the great mystic S. Paul as "the adoption, to wit the redemption, of the body"?

The use of the word "co-operation" suggests a direct answer. No isolated development is possible; the evolution of one faculty or of one part of man's nature at the expense of others brings speedy retribution, and every movement designed for the exclusive benefit of an individual, sex, or class, must inevitably fail.

Browning grasps this principle fully, and develops it in various ways.

First, we find in him a strong sense of the need for co-operation between body and soul. Every one who reads Browning as a poet or who knew him as a man must recognise the fact that he is no ascetic, but a full-blooded, robust, and virile being, able to cry with a conviction rare in the latter half of the nineteenth century—

> "How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
> All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy."—(*Saul*, ix.)

In *Rabbi ben Ezra*, xii., he strongly rejects the idea of regarding the body, in mediæval fashion, as the enemy of the soul. Yet he shows no confusion of thought concerning their relationship, and is very far from considering soul as a function of matter.

> "From first to last of lodging, I was I,
> And not at all the place that harboured me."
> (*Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, 1,017.)

This essential co-operation between body and soul is treated symbolically as well as literally, in such a way as to embrace the wider principle of the union of form with spirit. In *Andrea del Sarto* and *Fra Lippo Lippi* we are shown how the two must be combined in Art, form embodying and expressing spirit, spirit ensouling and vitalising form. In *Christmas Eve*, *A Death in the Desert*, and the Pope's speech in *The Ring and the Book*, the same idea is applied to religion, with the object of proving that though creeds and ceremonies—the body of faith—are necessary indeed, yet the spirit which they contain transcends them, and survives their inevitable dissolution.

Secondly, Browning often dwells upon the need for co-operation between all human powers and faculties, summing these up in many of the poems under the terms "Love" (*i.e.*, spiritual intuition and perception [1]) and "Knowledge" (*i.e.*, all intellectual and reasoning processes).

[1] Burridge points out that there is some affinity between Browning's theory of intuition and that of Gerson, who held that the religious sentiment is the immediate apprehension of God by the soul. But this theory is practically common to all mystical thinkers.

At one period of his life, chiefly during the drought of later middle age, he lost something of his own intuitive sense of the possibility of such co-operation, and was inclined to speak slightingly of intellectualism; partly, no doubt, in reaction against the materialistic science of the day, partly also from the consciousness of a faculty in himself transcending reason (*cf. A Pillar at Sebzevar*, 64, 88).

But in some of the last poems, *e.g.*, *Reverie*, the realisation of unity is again apparent; and, looking at Browning's work as a whole, it may be said that he, like all true mystics, is a reconciler of apparent opposites, harmonising reason with faith, science with religion, submission with aspiration. The view taken on this point by Professor Henry Jones (*Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*) is surely unfair and partial in so far as it considers Browning's characteristic attitude towards science to be one of hostility; whereas what Browning maintains is that man cannot "by searching find out God," and that, in Emerson's words, "Knowledge is the knowing that we cannot know." To point out the limitations of reason and the need of supplementing it by a higher, though as yet comparatively undeveloped faculty, implies no contempt for reason itself. The greater, when developed, includes the less; but it would be folly indeed to cast aside our candle before we are ready to hail the dawn, and this Browning, even when most dominated by the idea of Love's transcendence, never demands that we should do.

Such poems as *A Bean Stripe* distinctly point to the possibility of approaching the spiritual by means of the material, and to a realisation of the fact that

"in each case that which Science finds as the essential reality of matter and energy is that which is imperceptible by sense. The essential reality of the tangible is the intangible; of the audible is the inaudible; of the visible is the invisible; of the divisible is the indivisible; of the perceptible is the imperceptible. Then, underlying or within the gross matter and its motions, which we perceive, is a world of atomic, molecular, and ethereal matter, which no human sense can grasp." [1]

This realisation is fundamental with Browning, who has done more than any other man of his time or of ours, save perhaps Sir Oliver Lodge, to make scientific religion an accomplished fact.

Thirdly, co-operation between all evolving beings is a necessary condition of evolution itself, and one which Browning recognises in such passages as *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, 1,023 *et seq.*, and *Old Pictures in Florence*, xiv. But here we come to a remarkable point. In order that the co-operation may be perfect, men, according to Browning, must not simply work together; they must learn to love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" of spiritual as well as of physical evolution (*cf. In a Balcony*, 392 *et seq*). Love, in the form of individual passion, may stimulate growth beyond all else, and so is, in a sense, the aim and end of life in the body (*cf. Cristina*, v., *A Death in the Desert*, 244). In *Evelyn Hope* as well as in *Cristina* Browning suggests the possibility of a special tie between two individuals, carried on from life to life throughout the ages and contributing to the development of both. He treats of human love, indeed, in many aspects, but always as something

[1] Harris, *Philosophical Basis of Theism.*

symbolic, significant, and sacramental, a means to an end rather than an end in itself (*cf. Christmas Eve*, v.). Shelley, Rossetti, and indeed all the more mystical poets, are at one with him in this view.

Fourth and lastly, we reach profounder depths in touching upon Browning's sense of the need for co-operation between God and Man—of help given by the evolved to the unevolved, by the divine to the human. The Incarnation, in its mystic aspect, is to him the greatest of all realities, the precipitating touch which by converting God into Man hastens the ascent of Man to God. As man aspires God stoops to raise him, and the mystic Christ is born.

He expounds this most fully in *Saul*, xviii., and (less directly) in *Reverie*. The same keynote of Power manifested as Love is struck in *An Epistle of Karshish* ("So, the All-Great were the All-loving too"). Nay, he goes further and regards the voluntary Self-limitation of the Unmanifest as the ultimate test and proof of divine nature. Compare the words of his two greatest woman-characters, Pompilia and Balaustion. Pompilia says:—

> "I never realised God's birth before,
> How He grew likest God in being born."

Balaustion's expression of the same thought is even more emphatic:—

> "I think this is the authentic sign and seal
> Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
> And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts
> Into a rage to suffer for mankind
> And recommence at sorrow."
>
> (*Balaustion's Adventure.*)

For Man, the acceptance of this mystery, its recognition by the lower as well as the higher faculties, affords a clue to every problem.

> "I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise."
> (*A Death in the Desert*, 474.)

It remains to apply these suggestions concerning Browning's philosophy of life to the poem now under consideration, in which so much of that philosophy is contained. A fine expression of belief in the divine powers latent in Man occurs at i. 726 *et seq.*:—

> "Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost centre in us all
> Where Truth abides in fulness . . .
> . . . and to KNOW
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without."

And again in v. 620:—

> "So glorious is our nature, so august
> Man's inborn, uninstructed impulses,
> His naked spirit so majestical!"

Further on, in the same Book (ll. 694 *et seq.*) the three aspects of the divine manifestation are clearly enumerated.

Nor can we separate this idea of an Immanent God from the trust in the great evolutionary process which is its natural complement. The anticipation in *Paracelsus* of truths of physical science which Darwin was to announce to the world twenty-four years later is no small achievement.[1]

Browning no more "discovered" evolution than did Darwin;[2] it had been during the preceding centuries not so much an unknown fact as a forgotten principle, acquaintance with which is clearly to be traced in the work of Paracelsus and others like him.[3]

[1] Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, his *Descent of Man* in 1871. Even Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation* was not issued till 1844, nine years after *Paracelsus*. In the works of Samuel Butler, Lamarck, Buffon, Wallace, Erasmus Darwin, and Lord Monboddo, not to mention Aristotle and Bacon, we find various foreshadowings of the great message; see Prof. J. A. Thomson's essay on *Darwin's Predecessors* in the volume entitled *Darwin and Modern Science*, recently (1909) issued by the Cambridge University Press. But these foreshadowings can hardly be compared with its full and ecstatic announcement by Browning. They differ from the latter as the expression of a truth arrived at by slow mental processes of ratiocination and induction—the truth of the scientist—must always differ from a truth attained by sudden illumination from within—the truth of the poet. For suggestions on the incompleteness of the Darwinian view of evolution, *cf. The Making of Species*, by D. Dewar and E. Finn.

[2] It must be remembered that Darwin's fame rests rather upon his demonstration of the stages by means of which the evolutionary process is accomplished than upon his recognition of the process itself. Of these stages there is practically no hint in *Paracelsus*, but the *process* is grasped in its entirety.

[3] *Cf.* H. Walker, *The Greater Victorian Poets*, p. 246: "The idea [of evolution] is by no means the exclusive property of science; on the contrary, the earliest, widest, and most satisfactory expression of it was given in philosophy; and we find it even in poetry before the date of its adoption in science."

Nevertheless, to Browning, next after Shelley, belongs the credit of linking science with poetry, and of expressing in immortal verse the realisation, not merely of the greatest of physical laws, but of the fact which at once explains and conditions it—the inherent divinity of Man, the inexhaustible possibilities of the unfolding spirit in its house of clay.[1]

Never has the vast cosmic process been more gloriously described, save perhaps in the age-old stanzas of Dzyan; never has the joy of the Unmanifest in manifestation been better brought home to the human mind, than in the dying speech of Paracelsus.

Moreover, in the tracing of the quest, the position of Evil in the scheme of things is, if not definitely discussed, yet plainly enough indicated.

Browning regards the power of Good as transforming rather than conquering all that is imperfect and undeveloped. Through the conflict of these partial manifestations of the divine we come to the realisation of the divine itself; the shattered fragments, when joined together, compose the mirror of the manifested Universe, in which the being of the Unmanifest is reflected and enshrined.

Much is said in *Paracelsus* of the various kinds of co-operation needed to hasten man's progress, but most perhaps of the second—the union between all

[1] *Cf.* O. W. Holmes' poem of *The Nautilus*:—

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

the powers and faculties of human nature. The two principles of Knowledge and Love, representative, as has been said, of the intellectual and spiritual faculties, are recognised throughout, and their relative values are perhaps more justly stated than in some of the later poems. It is remarkably true that the aspiration of youth always takes the form of a desire to obtain power by means of Knowledge, and that the supremacy of Love is only realised later. Such is the case with Paracelsus, who has to attempt his great but hopeless task in order to learn humility, and the limits of human attainment. Knowledge must be sought, not for itself, or as a means of gaining predominance over other men, but in the service of Love, which finds its expression in self-sacrifice (*cf. Rephan*, 32). The principle of Love is traced, in its "faint beginnings," among the lower and the higher animals (v. 680–2); in Man it is found further evolved, and "In completed man begins anew a tendency to God" (v. 773).

Even in their present state men are distinguished by qualities

> "Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
> Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,
> Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
> But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
> And do their best to climb and get to him."
> (v. 881 *et seq.*)

But, having said this, Paracelsus must perforce conclude with the admission

> "All this I knew not, and I failed,"

for it is the pursuit of Knowledge alone which has

been his first fatal error—an error resulting, however, from intellectual conviction, not from weakness of judgment, and therefore capable of being recognised and repaired. Festus and Michal see the fault, but do not know how to set it right. It is left for Aprile to bring Paracelsus to his apotheosis, to the recognition of Love and Knowledge as "halves of one dissevered world" (ii. 624 *et seq.*). The union of Paracelsus with Aprile may further be taken as illustrating the need for co-operation between individuals.

Finally, the mysterious co-operation of God with Man involved in the idea of an incarnate[1] divine Being is not clearly expressed in this poem; it would, perhaps, hardly be fair to say that it is suggested.[1] But in later life Browning saw in it the crown and summit of his great philosophy, and the light which it casts upon *Saul* and *A Death in the Desert* cannot but illumine *Paracelsus*.

Here we are shown that "with Man comes intelligence, with Man come spiritual qualities, weak enough at first, but spiritual all the same; and amongst them comes Love, and with Love God Him-

[1] The one passage which would invalidate this statement was added after ii. 649 in the edition of 1849, but, somewhat curiously, it was suppressed in that of 1863 (*cf.* Bibliography) and in subsequent editions. The interpolation runs thus:—

> "Shall Man refuse to be ought less than God?
> Man's weakness is his glory—for the strength
> Which raises him to heaven and near God's self
> Came spite of it; God's strength his glory is,
> For thence came with our weakness sympathy
> Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.
> Had you but," &c.

self. And Love explains all, for it finds itself everywhere."[1]

If this be the case—if Man indeed interprets the processes which have brought him to birth (*cf.* v. 682–742), much more is he himself interpreted by the Greater Man, the World-Saviour, who sets before him the type of a perfected humanity.

[1] Prof. H. Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher.*

CHAPTER VI

IMAGERY IN THE POEM

ALTHOUGH *Paracelsus* was published when Browning was but twenty-three years of age, it bears few of the ordinary marks of immaturity, while at the same time it is free from most of the mannerisms of his later life.

Originality, love of beauty, of musical phrase, of poetic figure and apt simile are already manifest; the faults of harshness, jerkiness, and obscurity, the crabbéd expressions, and curious rather than beautiful images, which too often disfigure his later poems, are almost entirely absent. His philosophy is mature and developed, and differs little from that of his more advanced days, but never does the philosopher forget the poet, or the poet's task of providing a beautiful form for the beautiful thought. *Paracelsus* is ardent, flowing, and musical in style, and has all the freshness of youth without its extravagance. In it Browning's use of ornament and imagery is free but never over-liberal, and obedience to the law of restraint is always evident in its firm, balanced, and dignified structure.

It has been said that the story in Keats' *Endymion* is like a rivulet, winding its way through luxuriant

woods and meadows, constantly lost to sight beneath the wealth of natural beauty embowering its course. Browning, when he wrote *Paracelsus*, was not much older than the author of *Endymion*, but such a criticism could never be passed upon his poem. The flowers and shrubs which grow on the margin of his stream adorn only, and never obscure.

Yet Browning was one whose poetic genius had a highly figurative cast. He loved illustration, metaphor, and simile; they came easily to his mind, flowed naturally from his pen. In some of his poems they even crowd upon each other in his effort to express his thoughts,—now spontaneous and poetic, now far-fetched and strange; and though in *Paracelsus* his use of imagery is hardly as constant as in some later poems, and is certainly less grotesque, yet it is both free and original.

Some hundred and fifty actual figures, similes, and metaphors occur in the course of the poem, and these cover many subjects, and range from the ordinary metaphorical expressions common in everyday speech, such as

> "That life was blotted out—not so completely
> But scattered wrecks enough of it remain"

—an illustration which partakes of the character of everyday speech in its confusion of metaphor as well as in its triteness—to the elaborate and beautiful allegory (iv. 439–527) in which Paracelsus strives to explain to Festus how the lofty ideals with which he began life have failed of their due aim and been turned aside to meaner ends.

Browning draws his illustrations from many sources

—from natural history, from human characteristics, from real or legendary incidents, from ordinary or extraordinary occupations. He touches occasionally on his knowledge of science or medicine—and again, the adventures of war or travel provide him with some of his most effective similes. Curiously enough, however, illustrations from the arts, so common in his later poems, are almost entirely absent, and the very few that exist are, with the exception of two passages (ii. 574–606 and v. 297–309) of little interest or significance. Some fine images, inspired by the various phenomena of light, suggest the scientific rather than the æsthetic mind, and not only are there none drawn from effects of colour, but, throughout the poem, references to colour are rare.

The two things that at this period of his life seem most to have appealed to Browning are Man and Nature;—Man in thought and action, illustrated by Nature—Nature in her vital aspects and Man as explaining this vitality.

He puts the second of these aspects very clearly before us in a remarkable passage where Paracelsus, on his death-bed, sums up in one splendid outburst the fruit of all his investigations. He tells us how—

> "[God] dwells in all,
> From life's minute beginnings, up at last
> To Man—the consummation of this scheme
> Of being."

He points out that aim of evolution which hitherto had been but faintly evident—hinted at only by those attributes and faculties which we trace in Nature, and which, although incomplete in themselves—

"All shape out dimly the superior race,"

and then he shows how this "grand result"—

> "Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
> Each back step in the circle."

He then passes directly to the subject of imagery, and demonstrates how Man and Nature are so bound together that each illustrates and explains the other, Man revealing in human terms that unconscious Nature of which he is the consummation.

> "Man, once descried, imprints for ever
> His presence on all lifeless things; the winds
> Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
> A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh,
> Never a senseless gust, now Man is born.
> The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
> . . . . .
> The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
> With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
> Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
> Beneath a warm moon like a happy face."

But though Browning indicates in this passage how Man imposes his faculties on Nature, thereby illustrating and completing her, yet in practice he rather shows us the other side—the thoughts and actions of Man, explained by analogy with Nature, or even Nature illustrating, one by another, her own various moods. To give a list of such images would be tedious, but a few of the finest may be mentioned. Well known are the beautiful lines in Book I., beginning, "Ask the gier-eagle" (347), and "I go to prove my soul" (557); and quite simple and at the

same time unusually original and effective are such similes as these :—

> "The boughs are swoln with blooms
> Like chrysalids impatient for the air." (v. 672.)

> "Like an asp
> The wind slips whispering from bough to bough."
> (iii. 1002.)

> "To perfect and consummate all,
> Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
> I would supply all chasms with music." (ii. 475.)

> "The news of friends
> Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
> As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight."
> (iii. 138.)

Or this metaphor, where Festus, rebuked for his efforts to detain Paracelsus at Einsiedeln, exclaims—

> "A solitary briar the bank puts forth,
> To save our swan's nest floating out to sea."
> (i. 138.)

At times Browning displays considerable elaboration in his use of imagery, so that it almost seems as if he cares more for the picture he describes than for the idea he is illustrating. But though it is true that such figures as the allegory in Book IV., already referred to, or the one in which Paracelsus, dying, describes his feelings concerning his past life (v. 471–89), or those used by Aprile in ii. 491–609, may seem unduly elaborate, yet if we examine the attendant circumstances we find that even

though, here and there, the image may outrun the idea, all is dramatically correct. Aprile's torrent of metaphors and similes issues from a crazed brain. Paracelsus speaks in the disorder of bitterness and self-contempt, or in the hour of death itself. There is no deliberate elaborating of the simile, such as we find in Milton, in order to bring before the mind some sublime or grandiose picture; the exaggeration, if exaggeration there be, is in harmony with the mood or character of the speaker.

This brings us to the second important aspect of Browning's use of imagery Browning's genius was essentially dramatic, and the figures that occurred to such a poet would themselves naturally be dramatic too. Thus beside the large body of metaphors and similes inspired by inanimate Nature, we find another, equally large, drawn from active life. The concrete example appealed to Browning as an illustration—the little story from legend or history, the incident of game or battle or journey, the vivid experience, the keen emotion. The dramatic spirit makes these illustrations telling and lifelike, while at the same time it limits them strictly to their proper function. They pass before our eyes like brief but sharply defined flashes, catching our attention for the moment, but forgotten again in the brilliance of the idea they are intended to elucidate.

Sometimes they are mere brief references to some poignant experience—

> "Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity; . . .
> And these, I have lost!—gone, shut from me for ever,
> Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more!"
> (iii. 1028.)

"I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels,
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep." (iv. 37.)

"That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,
I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat." (i. 263.)

But the majority are more deliberate and carefully drawn than these. The reader will discover them for himself; it will be enough to give one or two typical examples.

The first is one of several drawn from acts of war—

"We who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace,
And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
To stanch our wounds, secure from further harm:
We are assailed to life's extremest verge." (iii. 766.)

The next is one of the little allegories we find scattered here and there throughout the poem—

"A story tells
Of some far embassy dispatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend." (i. 128.)

Not always is Browning happy in his imagery. Now and then we find similes which suggest to our

mind too ugly a picture, too painful a thought, and occasionally others that are curiously far-fetched and even almost unintelligible. More often, however, they are beautiful, apt, and forcible, and at once truly adorn the verse and vividly illuminate the thoughts which, in their philosophic depths and subtle mysticism, might otherwise sometimes fail of perfect comprehension.

CHAPTER VII

BROWNING'S METRES

PARACELSUS is written in blank verse. In it Browning has already freed himself from the influence of Shelley, so noticeable in *Pauline*, and reveals himself in all his originality, with his own unmistakable tone. It is Browning who writes for us, but it is a Browning who has not yet allowed his mannerisms (the germs of which are already visible) to leave their marks too plainly on his natural love of beauty and music.

One of the chief characteristics of the verse in this poem is its great variety. Browning is no slave to the definition of blank verse. When he pleases the ten syllables become eleven or even twelve, the iambic foot is replaced by the trochaic, spondaic, or anapæstic, instead of the five accents he gives us four, or as many as he chooses. For all this, however, the verse is far from being chaotic or irregular; it is as truly blank verse as that of *Paradise Lost*, and, indeed, now and then even bears something of a Miltonic character.

Let us take a specimen passage:—

A "Yés, it was ín me; Ì was bórn for ít—
B Í, | Paracélsus: ìt was míne || by rìght.

C Dóubtless a séarching and impétuous sóul
D Might léarn from its ówn mótions thát some tásk
E Like thís awáited ít abóut the wórld;
F Might séek somewhére in thís blank líse of óurs
G For fít delíghts to stáy its lóngings vást;
H And, gráppling Náture, só prevail on hér
I To fíll the créature fúll | she dáred to fráme
J Húngry for jóy; and, brávely týrannous,
K Grów in demánd, still cráving móre and móre,
L And máke each jóy concéded próve a pledge
M Of óther jóy to fóllow—" (v. 601-613.)

These lines contain many of the principal variations of blank verse. Thus we find trochees constituting the first foot in A, B, C, J, and K. In D there is a spondee. Lines A, B, D, and J all have one accent much weaker than the others, while C hardly appears to have a fifth accent at all.

The position of the cæsura varies widely, the pause occurring in different cases after the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th syllables, while B contains two pauses, one after the first syllable and one after the fifth. Enjambement occurs in seven lines and alliteration in five.

To the above-mentioned variations let us add two or three others of which the specimen passage contains no example, and we shall then get the following list:—

1. Variation in number of syllables.
2. ,, ,, ,, ,, accents.
3. ,, ,, arrangement of accents.
   (*a*) Use of trochee.
   (*b*) ,, spondee and pyrrhic.
   (*c*) ,, anapæst, &c.
4. Variations in position of cæsura.
5. Use of enjambement.
6. ,, alliteration.

1. The use of eleven syllables in a line is common in *Paracelsus*, that of twelve rare, though not unknown. In many cases, however, the extra syllable is obscured by slurring or elision. This is due to the use of such words as *spirit*, *even*, *wandering*, *power*, &c., evidently often intended to be read *sprite* or *sp'rit*, *e'en* or *ev'n*, *wand'ring*, *pow'r*.

"And humbler spirits accept what we refuse." (iv. 352.)

"I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind." (v. 808.)

"Power, and with much power, always much more love." (v. 859.)

"Of mastery o'er the elemental world." (v. 824.)

See also i. 7, 79.

It will be observed as well that *of the* is frequently slurred, and that the terminations *ious*, *uous* are usually treated as monosyllables by Browning.

"Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks." (iii. 292.)

"Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn." (v. 737.)

In a few cases the extra syllable, coming in the middle of the verse, is not slurred or elided, but merely pronounced very rapidly, giving the same effect as the use of a triplet in music.

"And patient *cherishing* of the self-same spirit." (i. 146.)

"Cannot object to ruin *utter and* drear." (iii. 273.)

The Miltonic character of the last example may incidentally be remarked.

The most common cause of an extra syllable is a feminine ending to a line, and the proportion of such endings in *Paracelsus* (forty-six in Book I, fifty-six in Book II, and so on) is sufficiently large to be noted as a distinct peculiarity of the poem. Possibly they are a reminiscence of the influence of Milton or Shelley, an influence which afterwards lost its force, for Browning's later blank verse is singularly devoid of this characteristic.

"Rejecting past example, practice, pre(cept)." (i. 415.)

"I would throw down the pencil as the chis(el)." (ii. 464.)

"Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, forgot(ten)." (iv. 208.)

Occasionally the extra syllable is found before the cæsura, but this is not of frequent occurrence.

"If night
Be spent the while, the bett(er)! Recall how oft."
(i. 116.)

Lines in which two extra syllables occur are rare, but by no means absent. One of the two is always due to a feminine ending, while the other is usually slurred or elided, or else forms part of a rapidly pronounced anapæst.

"I perished in an arrogant self-reli(ance)." (i. 596.)

"I cannot keep ŏn the strétch: 'tis no back-shrink(ing)"
(ii. 58),

but in a few lines both syllables are fairly emphatic.

"That plant
Shall never wave its tangles light*ly* and soft*ly*." (i. 55.)

2. Properly speaking, a line of blank verse is an iambic pentameter, and therefore contains five accents. Browning, however, varies the number with some freedom, the commonest variation being that in which one accent, usually the third, is so much weakened that it may almost be considered non-existent. This is generally due to the fact that the syllable on which the accent should fall is one that cannot well bear sentence-stress.

"Qúiet and frágrant às befíts their hóme." (i. 6.)

"Dóubtless a séarching and impétuous sóul." (v. 603.)

Six accents are more rarely found, but there are some tolerable examples:—

"And páinted bírds' dówn, fúrs and físhes' skíns." (ii. 515.)

"As nów it béats—perchánce a lóng, lóng tíme." (i. 4)

"Its bléak wínd, hánkering áfter píning léaves." (i. 19.)

In these last two lines the six accents, combined with the length of the accented syllables, give a certain lingering quality to the verse, which is in peculiar harmony with the feeling expressed. Other examples of variation in the number of accents will be given when we consider Browning's use of spondees and anapæsts.

3. (*a*) Five out of the thirteen lines of the specimen passage begin with a trochee, a very common variation in Browning, as in most writers of blank verse. In 183 lines (v. 601–784) thirty-two are of this type. In ii. 490–609 there are twenty-two beginning

thus and some such proportion seems to hold good throughout the poem. Trochees also occur in other positions in the line, though not so commonly. Examples of these are :—

"A stone | flóor ŏne | may writhe on like a worm." (iv. 543.)

"Then all is still ; | éarth ĭs | a wintry clod." (v. 666.)

"Nor blame those creaking trees | bént wĭth | their fruit." (i. 29.)

Sometimes two trochees are found in the same verse, as in—

"Gátherĕd | these magic herbs, | bérrў | and bud" (ii. 546),

but such cases are rare.

(*b*) Browning's most characteristic metrical variation is his use of the spondee. His ear, always fond of forcible and direct sounds, seems to have delighted in the impression of weight and strength produced by this foot, and in the same connection we may note how the effect he desires to bring about is enhanced by the quantity of his accented syllables. The use of long stresses is a marked characteristic of Browning's blank verse, and does much to give it that peculiar quality of weight, sonorousness, and dignity which it shares with the verse of Marlowe and of Milton. In his use of spondees, especially, is this remarkable, for it is but rarely that we find one such foot in which stress and quantity do not concur.

The spondaic effect is very common throughout the poem, though in many cases it is really due to the

presence of a trochee following an iamb. This is the case, for instance, in v. 654:—

"The cen | tré fíre | héaves ŭn | derneath the earth."

but in the next line—

" | Aňd thĕ | éarth chán | ges like a human face,"

there is a true spondee, preceded by a pyrrhic.

A still better example is the following:—

"A stubble-field, | ór ă | cáne-bráke, | a marsh" (i. 42.)

one of those harsh lines characteristic of Browning, which yet do so much to add the charm of individuality to his style.

A common position for the true spondee is at the end of a line—

"But this was born in me; I was | máde só | " (v. 623.)
"Of búl | rush white | ning ìn | the sún: | láugh nów! | " (i. 43.)

and in the last example we see how the spondee makes up for a preponderance of weak syllables in the middle of the line.

The six-accent line, already referred to, of course usually contains at least one spondee.

"Gréy criék | ĕts ănd | shy líz | ards and | qúick spí | (ders)" (i. 39.)

consists of spondee, pyrrhic, spondee, pyrrhic, spondee, + extra weak syllable.

"Ĭts bléak | wínd hánk | ĕrĭng áf | tĕr pí | nĭng léaves" (i. 19.)

contains iamb, spondee, anapæst (or iamb, if we accept an elision), iamb, iamb.

Occasionally, as we see in i. 39, more than one spondee occurs in the same line, but this is rare. Another good example is ii. 43 :—

"Tíme fléets, | yóuth fádes | life is | ăn émp | tў dréam."

(*c*) Other metrical feet occur very occasionally throughout the poem. The anapæst, to which reference has already been made, is the commonest, but even this is rare, and some apparent cases may be explained by elision. There are, however, a few good examples :—

"As ìf, except through me, | thŏu hādst seárched | or striv(en). (ii. 369.)

"The wear | ĭsŏme vést | of falsehood galling me." (iii. 285.)

Whether amphibrachs ever occur is an open question. There are certain lines of doubtful scansion in which we seem to find them, but we may feel tolerably certain that Browning never thought of them as such, and that their apparent presence is due to the already mentioned weakening of one of the five stresses. Such a line is the following :—

"While all beside
" | Wās bréaking | tŏ thĕ lást | they held out bright " (v. 8),

which may be held to contain an amphibrach and an anapæst, though some people will prefer to place a slight stress upon *to* and count the line as regular.

4. Browning is nearly as free as Milton in his use of the cæsura, and this characteristic gives a very pleasant variety to his verse, since we rarely find three consecutive lines in which the pause occurs in the same place. This point is sufficiently illustrated in the specimen passage.

5. Enjambement is introduced very freely. Roughly speaking, quite half of the lines in *Paracelsus* must be unstopped, and we often find passages of considerable length in which nearly every line runs on. Thus of the first eighteen lines of Book II only three are end-stopped. This practice, combined, of course, with constant use of the medial full-stop, gives a very free movement to the poem, a characteristic which was evidently pleasing to Browning's ear and in harmony with the quality of his thought, for it persists all through his blank verse, becoming perhaps even more marked in his later writings.

6. Browning makes considerable use of alliteration, and in the specimen passage on pp. 64–5 no fewer than five lines out of thirteen bear traces of it. This is a larger proportion than is common, but in the 305 lines of Paracelsus' dying speech there are 45 examples of alliteration, and 41 occur in the first 200 lines of Book III. It is seldom that more than two alliterating syllables are found in a verse, and such words commonly appear in adjacent feet.

"Progress is
The *l*aw of *l*ife, man's self is not yet Man!"
(v. 744.)

"Each *s*inew *s*trung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall *s*tart up and *s*tand on his own earth."
(v. 765–6.)

Sometimes Browning disperses his alliterative syllables between two lines:—

> " Death
> Who blabs so oft the *f*ollies of this world:
> And I am Death's *f*amiliar, as you know."
> (iii. 109–11.)

> " Whether you have not rather wild *d*esire
> For this *d*istinction than security
> Of its existence?" (i. 321–3.)

At times, though rarely, double alliteration is found. Examples are:—

> " *V*ary, and view its *p*leasure from all *p*oints."
> (iii. 134.)

> " My hair
> *T*ingles for *t*riumph. *S*low and *s*ure the morn
> Shall break." (iv. 385–7.)

Browning's alliteration is never obtrusive, even in the passages (such as iii. 47–79) where there are traces of it in nearly every other line. Indeed, as alliteration it is often very imperfect. There is no regular system for the occurrence of the rime-letter, and frequently alliteration to the eye is obscured to the ear by want of accent or by the use of consonant groups. Thus in iii. 48–54, the letter *s* occurs initially no less than nine times, but owing to the fact that in six out of the nine words it is followed by other consonants, no unduly alliterative effect is produced.

It only remains to consider the four lyrics which occur in the course of the poem.

The first of these, sung by Aprile (ii. 281 *et seq.*)

is written for the most part in octosyllabic couplets, varied at intervals by a quatrain or sestet with alternate rime, or a quatrain with close rime. The metre is iambic, but a truncated first foot produces a trochaic effect in several lines, much as in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and a few regular trochaic lines occur. These variations, combined with the use of occasional feminine endings and of some four-syllabled ejaculatory lines at the beginning of the second stanza, give a general impression of irregularity which is doubtless intended to indicate the unsettled state of Aprile's mind. More irregular still, however, is the third lyric—

> "The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
> To their first fault and withered in their pride"—

sung by Paracelsus in Book IV 450 *et seq.*

> "This is the record; and my voice the wind's,"

cries the singer, and we seem to mark the fluctuations of the wind and the rippling of the sea in the mingled iambs, trochees, and anapæsts of the four-stressed rhythm, which in its freedom and variety reminds us so strongly of the metre of *Christabel.* In the extraordinarily complicated system of rimes we may perhaps again trace the influence of Coleridge, though not even in *Kubla Khan* or in any of his odes did he weave such a bewildering web. The result is peculiarly harmonious, and it is interesting to remark some of the devices by means of which the irregular strophes and the wild welter of rimes are held together. Such devices are,—the recurrence at

irregular intervals throughout an entire and very lengthy strophe of the rime-note struck in the first line, the triplets closing the first and second strophes, and the threefold repetition of the rime-word *cried*, which gives such a plaintive effect to the concluding passage.

The fourth song, with which Festus soothes the dying Paracelsus (v. 419 *et seq.*), is beautiful, but less original than the preceding ones, for its couplets, with their mingling of iambs and trochees, reproduce almost exactly the light and tripping movement of *L'Allegro*.

The second lyric, sung by Paracelsus at the Alsatian inn (iv. 190 *et seq.*), is different in character from any of the others. Instead of couplets, or strophes of varying length, we have here regular stanzas of an interesting and original form.

The rime-order, A B A B B C C C, is the same as that used by Giles Fletcher in his adaptation of the Spenserian stanza in *Christ's Victory and Triumph*, but Fletcher's lines consist of ten and twelve syllables, and the effect produced by Browning's octosyllabic verse is widely different. Browning has succeeded in conveying an impression of long drawn-out sweetness and gravity which is hard to analyse, but which seems to depend in part on the preponderance of long syllables (only ten out of the sixty four stresses are short), partly on the repetition of vowel sounds, especially marked in the first stanza, and partly on the recurrence of rimes at short intervals; and is due above all to the triple rime at the close of each stanza. This triplet tends to emphasise to the mind of the reader the deliberate monotony of sound and the subtle melancholy of thought for which the lyric is remarkable.

Even apart from these exquisite interpolations, most readers will feel that the verse of *Paracelsus* reaches a very high level; an extraordinarily high one, if we consider the author's age. It is sonorous and dignified without being heavy, original without being mannered, forcible without being harsh, musical without being over-sweet. In the management of the metre, in the varied rhythm of the verse, in the intelligent use of assonance, onomatopœia, or the other devices of the skilful versifier, Browning displays no uncertain hand, and we can only regret that from time to time throughout his later life he suffered the metrical power that he developed thus early to be obscured by the defects of those very qualities which constitute the peculiar merit of his youthful work.

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The 1849 edition differs widely from that of 1835, many alterations being made and new passages inserted. It is noticeable, however, that the finest passage in the poem—v. 601 to end—stands in the later editions practically as written by Browning at the age of twenty-three.

Subsequent editions follow that of 1849 in most respects, but in the case of a few lines the 1835 version—altered in 1849—was restored in 1868. Two lines (iv. 524 and v. 96 in the present edition, which, owing to considerations of copyright, is based on that of 1863) are not found in the first version and were deleted in that of 1868. One passage, inserted in the 1849 edition after ii. 649, has since been deleted, and appears in none of the later reprints except Cassell's edition of Robert Browning's early poems. (People's Library.) For this passage, see page 54.

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PARACELSUS

INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

March 15*th*, 1835. R.B.

PERSONS

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS, *à student.* FESTUS and MICHAL, *his friends.* APRILE, *an Italian poet.*

I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE, *Würzburg; a garden in the environs.* 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

Par. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—

This quiet garden-scene at Würzburg forms a proper setting for the farewell of Paracelsus to home and friends.

At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!
For if you would remember me aright,
As I was born to be, you must forget
All fitful, strange and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends!
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"
For some few sunny days; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny; I would look
Liker my nature's truth: and both are frail,
And both beloved, for all their frailty.

Mich. Aureole!

Par. Drop by drop! she is weeping like a child!
Not so! I am content—more than content;
Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay:
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,

5. *Your memories* = the remembrance of you; *my memory* (7) = the remembrance of me. This remembrance is represented as enshrined in the heart, and there embalmed by love.

15. *My heart . . . to it.* An allusion to those "hours of insight" when the lower nature is harmonised with the higher, and content to follow its leading. The more usual state is described by St. Paul in *Rom.* vii. 23.

That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries? Ah, at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequestered nest!—this kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through near, this way, and it appears
A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Mich. In truth we have lived carelessly and well.

Par. And shall, my perfect pair!—each, trust me, born
For the other; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay: that plant

38–48. A peculiar characteristic of Browning's nature-treatment is his love of describing small birds and animals and their ways—often by means of a series of vivid epithets. *Cf.* v. 432–47; *Saul* vi. and *Caliban upon Setebos*, 45–55. The swiftness and vitality of such creatures attract him more than any beauty of "inanimate" nature.

47. *Glossy balls.* Many species of caterpillar weave their chrysalides on the stems or leaves of plants. *Cf.* v. 673.

Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah, see, the sun sinks broad
Behind Saint Saviour's: wholly gone, at last!
Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile!
You are ours to-night at least; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seemed to love:
But that last look destroys my dream—that look
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!
How far was Würzburg with its church and spire
And garden-walls and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting?
Paracelsus. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks and words,—
Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget

65, &c. The practical Festus is half-puzzled by, half-proud of, the idealist, to whom the "Star in the East" constantly beckons. Meanwhile the idealist, following his star, is as yet scarcely conscious of how far it must lead him from the ways of men along a predestined path. *Cf.* 149–53.

Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one
Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too filled with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up:
Whereas, behold how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike! When Festus learns
That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself; that I have just
As varied appetite for joy derived
From common things; a stake in life, in short,
Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
That life affords not, would as soon destroy;—
He may convince himself that, this in view,
I shall act well advised. And last, because,
Though heaven and earth and all things were at stake,
Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve.
Fest. True: and the eve is deepening, and we sit
As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it
As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn; or could whisper it by fits
(Trithemius busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
Half frightened by the awful tomes around;
Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight: but, to-morrow!
Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?
We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
Will rise between us:—all my freest mind?
'Tis the last night, dear Aureole!

Par. Oh, say on!
Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
To be performed for you: say on! If night
Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft
My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears
Have—never wearied you, oh, no!—as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,
Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
And its green hills were all the world to us;
And still increasing to this night which ends
My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one day
You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!
Fest. In truth? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,
Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
To stay your course: I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy dispatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend; and yet desist
No whit from projects where repose nor love
Have part.
Par. Once more? Alas! as I forebode.
Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.
Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you
wish?

133 7. *Cf. Bhagavad Gitâ*, ii. 59: "The objects of sense, but not the relish for them, turn away from an abstemious dweller in the body; and even relish turneth away from him after the Supreme is seen."

That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission, and so die!
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
From aught which marked me out apart from men:
I would have lived their life, and died their death,
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
Taught me to know mankind and know myself;
And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made plain to me,
Now that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely!

Fest. When you deign
To hear my purpose . . .

Par. Hear it? I can say

154–62. Paracelsus complains of an experience common to many. One soul may unconsciously stimulate another to aspirations which it cannot share. The average good man has not always the courage of his convictions; whereas genius and saintship go all lengths, knowing that the Truth shall make them free.

163, &c. Paracelsus misses something here by reason of his impatience. But Browning is right in showing (183, &c.) how difficulty of agreement between friends is often increased by the limitations of language.

Beforehand all this evening's conference!
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses: first,
Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end,
And what God's will; no two faiths e'er agreed
As his with mine. Next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may;
Accordingly, I venture to submit
My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorise:
Well, he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here to be avoided, there
An oversight to be repaired: in fine
Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognise,
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,
And nought forbids my looking up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.
When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my scheme; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though no God there were;
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Folly of man, Festus abhors the most;
But which these tenets sanctify at once,
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus?
He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design; laugh loud that God should send

Vast longings to direct us; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust or gold; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it!
But this ambiguous warfare . . .
Fest. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it?—for his sake, not yours? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words
Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,
Had share in your undoing.
Para. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.
Fest. Prove that to me—but that! Prove, you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth!
You smile; but I had gathered from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—

212. Festus asks much. He wishes to be assured (1) that the search will be carried on by means which the accepted canons of morality and religion approve, allowing nothing for special cases; (2) that the object of the search is legitimate for a mortal—not, *e.g.*, like Faust's claim to infinite knowledge; (3) that the present undertaking is a direct means to its attainment. Upon these conditions only will he give his sanction to the quest.

Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain ;
But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.
Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should scorn . . .
Fest. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished, and at length matures
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first :
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach
A portion of his lore: and not one youth
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
Now, this new ardour which supplants the old,
I watched, too: 'twas significant and strange,
In one matched to his soul's content at length

248–62. A good account of the soul's first realisation of the quality of "Vivéka," or Discrimination between the transitory and the permanent—a realisation interrupted for some time by frequent storms of desire, not yet outlived.

With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize,
To see the sudden pause, the total change;
From contest, the transition to repose—
From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
That careless bearing, free from all pretence
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
What it professed to praise—though not so well
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.
That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,
I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat; but it was not thus:
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
That you prepared to task to the uttermost
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim
Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
In scope that it included their best flights,
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
In place of many,—the secret of the world,
Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate.
—That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
This purpose, with the sages of the Past,
Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
And that this aim shall differ from a host

Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this,—that in itself alone,
Shall its reward be, not an alien end
Blending therewith; no hope, nor fear, nor joy,
Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
Devotion to sustain you or betray:
Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus: 290
I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this
My ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be His organ. All
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
No better than your sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you: and 'tis doubtless need
That He appoint no less the way of praise
Than the desire to praise; for though I hold 300
With you, the setting forth such praise to be

285 90. *Cf. Bhagavad Gîtâ*, v. 28: "With senses, mind, and reason ever controlled, solely pursuing liberation, the Sage, having for ever cast away desire, fear, and passion, verily is liberated."

292–5. Paracelsus emphasises his sense of special vocation, and of a Power which uses the individual as its instrument. *Cf. Rabbi ben Ezra*, xxxi.–ii.

297, &c. Festus admits Paracelsus' correction, but doubts whether, though the aim be right, the way chosen is legitimate. Warning his friend that he means to take him seriously (for Paracelsus' answers are often half-mocking or satirical in his impatience), he proceeds to subject him to searching questions —namely, whether his conviction of his own high destiny is unmixed with any desire for self-aggrandisement, and whether that conviction extends to the method as well as to the object of the search.

The natural end and service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind—
Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.
Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as He wills shall gather
Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
Valued, perchance. He seeks not that His altars
Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.
Suppose this, then; that God selected you
To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm),
I cannot think you dare annex to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
An intense hope; nor let your gifts create
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
Conducive to success, make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction, than security
Of its existence? whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Par. [*after a pause.*] No, I have nought to fear!
Who will may know

328, &c. Paracelsus here fails to realise that "The harmonised man, having abandoned the fruit of action, attaineth to the eternal Peace; the non-harmonised, impelled by desire, attached to fruit, are bound." "Fruit" may take more forms than the obvious one of worldly success; and the strength, and even the

The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
It be so?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct striving
Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success forever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my own,
But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human will
To institute such impulses?—still less,
To disregard their promptings? What should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength He deigns impart!
Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear
Their holding light His charge, when every hour
That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
I can abjure so well the idle arts
These pedants strive to learn and teach; Black Arts,
Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—
Let others prize: too intimate a tie

nobility, of a desire does not necessarily hinder it from being the cause of failure in one, perhaps in many, lives.

347. *Gier-eagle*, probably a small vulture.

Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
To help me—what are these, at best, beside
God helping, God directing everywhere,
So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
And every object there be charged to strike,
Teach, gratify her master God appoints?
And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!
I can devote myself; I have a life
To give; I, singled out for this, the One!
Think, think; the wide East, where all Wisdom sprung;
The bright South, where she dwelt; the hopeful North,
All are passed o'er—it lights on me! 'Tis time
New hopes should animate the world, new light
Should dawn from new revealings to a race
Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; thus shall
The heaven reserved for us, at last receive
Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
Not seldom glorified their life below.

Fest. My words have their old fate and make faint stand

360, &c. A contemptuous reference to the powers obtainable by Black Magic. *Cf.* the Faust Legend; the historical Faust was a contemporary of Paracelsus.

364–6. The claim based on a sense of special vocation is here somewhat presumptuously stated, as in the monologue of the sublime fanatic, Johannes Agricola.

372–5. "The race weighed down so long" seems to mean the whole of the Western world, and the weight is materialism.

379. "Whose beams . . . life below." *Cf.* Tennyson's Idyll of *The Holy Grail*, ll. 907–15.

Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
Why not pursue it in a vast retreat,
Some one of Learning's many palaces,
After approved example?—seeking there
Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
Who laid up treasure with the like intent?
—So lift yourself into their airy place,
And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;
Succeeding with new-breathed and untired force,
As at old games a runner snatched the torch
From runner still: this way success might be.
But you have coupled with your enterprise,
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
What books are in the desert? writes the sea
The secret of her yearning in vast caves
Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
Has Wisdom sat there and recorded aught
You press to read? Why turn aside from her
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,

392–414. Festus' argument is, that a man must learn from the wisest of his predecessors; knowledge is cumulative, and none can afford to cut himself off from its recognised sources. He regards it, in fact, as the result of purely intellectual processes; whereas the mystic teaches that Wisdom (transcending and including Knowledge) can be attained by intuitive perception. *Cf.* Introd. chap. iv. (*Aprile*). *Cf.* 733–7. Paracelsus, like Wordsworth, sought for Wisdom in the Book of Nature and in the lives of humble men. For the conventional pride of intellect which will receive Truth through accredited channels only, *cf. Cleon*, 343–53.

Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?
Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay,
Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
She called an endless curse on, so it came:
Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops that never heard her voice,
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!
Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
Whate'er you may protest, Knowledge is not
Paramount in your love; or for her sake
You would collect all help from every source—
Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
And those who showed them not.

Par. What shall I say?
Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
As from without some master, so it seemed,
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
Expresses what I would convey: but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature
So became manifest. I knew not then
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
Were laid away in some great trance—the ages

424–32. Paracelsus, speaking of the inner fire, prefers to attribute its activity to an external Power rather than to the workings of the Higher Self.

Coming and going all the while—till dawned
His true time's advent; and could then record
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,—
Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes and woods
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
The everlasting concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
'Twas then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all.
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die,
Or elevate myself far, far above
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
At once to trample on, yet save mankind,
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning

457–71. A prevision, perhaps, of the supreme sacrifice of a World-Saviour, who "becomes as one of the Divine in his desire to give rather than to take, in his wish to help rather than be helped, in his resolution to feed the hungry rather than take manna from heaven himself" (*Light on the Path*, M. Collins).

Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep:
Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work, share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks,
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
His realm: and he points, smiling, to his scarf
Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the East,
Where these must be displayed!

Fest. Good: let us hear
No more about your nature, "which first shrank
From all that marked you out apart from men!"

Par. I touch on that; these words but analyse
The first mad impulse: 'twas as brief as fond,
For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguished here and there a shape
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
Interpret my own thoughts:—"Behold the clue
To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine
To do, these have accomplished: we are peers.
They know, and therefore rule: I, too, will know!"
You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom fame

Is lavish to attest the lords of mind;
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
Would satiate my cravings when obtained,
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
Or staggered only at his own vast wits;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me; and this lasted till one night
When, as I sat revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—"Seest thou not,
Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss?
Even from thy strength. Consider: hast thou gazed
Presumptuously on Wisdom's countenance,
No veil between; and can thy faltering hands
Unguided by thy brain the sight absorbs
Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
Whom radiance ne'er distracted? Live their life
If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their eyes
Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts

519. *Blinkers* = those limited in vision, of whom it can never be said that "the Light of Heaven led them astray." *Cf.* the character of Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss.*

523–6. The "idol of thine own" = some lesser object of worship, perhaps a celestial being, but not the Supreme. *Cf. Bhagavad Gitâ*, ix. 25: "They who worship the Shining Ones go to the Shining Ones; . . . but My worshippers come unto Me."

In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
But have some idol of thine own to dress
With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
But to become a star to men for ever.
Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.
Look one step onward, and secure that step."
And I smiled as one never smiles but once;
Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
And God Himself, and all God's intercourse
With the human mind; I understood, no less,
My fellows' studies, whose true worth I saw,
But smiled not, well aware Who stood by me.
And softer came the voice—"There is a way:
'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:
Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed—
"Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,
Be sure, even to the end!"—I answered not,
Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued
With comprehension and a steadfast will;
And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.
If there took place no special change in me,
How comes it all things wore a different hue

538–43. *Cf. St. Matthew* xx. 22: "Are ye able to drink o the cup that I shall dnrik of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

546–51. The results of the Inner Vision of which Paracelsus speaks are very like those enumerated by Dr. Richard Bucke in his great book, *Cosmic Consciousness.*

Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast consequence,
Teeming with grand results, loaded with fate?
So that when quailing at the mighty range
Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
Its bearings and effects alone—at once
What was a speck expands into a star,
Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In His good time!
Mich. Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!
Fest. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
Were it the trackless air, and not a path
Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.
You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
But they were famous in their day—the proofs
Remain. At least accept the light they lend.
Par. Their light! the sum of all is briefly this;
They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, what of all their lore abates?
No; I reject and spurn them utterly
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,

559–65. This is the passage said to have been a favourite one with General Gordon.

While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?
Fest. And yet
As strong delusions have prevailed ere now.
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin. I have heard of such: yourself
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.
Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn amid the clouds afar?
Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale?
For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
Ages ago; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories, as now, when seems once more
The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.
Fest. And who am I, to challenge and dispute
That clear belief? I will divest all fear.

591, &c. A tentative suggestion is made here with regard to belief in Reincarnation—*i.e.*, that it would explain the peculiar understanding we often possess of lives unlike our own. Browning offers other suggestions on the same subject in *Evelyn Hope*.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us!
Par. No, Sweet!
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well; but there our intercourse must end:
I never will be served by those I serve.
Fest. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us;
'Tis but a spot as yet: but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.
How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love?
It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought; I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be,
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval
Reward you; put reward aside; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph: still you must retain
Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause their own.
They should ward off fate's envy—the great gift,

614, &c. Festus is right; for, sacrifice being the law of the spiritual life, to refuse to profit by sacrifice as well as to make it is to cut oneself off from the cosmic process.

624. *Let be* = Suppose.

Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!
Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I! And you?
Do you not feel this? Say that you feel this!
Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps!
My course allures for its own sake—its sole
Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
Your sages say, "if human, therefore weak:"
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own.
Would there were some real sacrifice to make!
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
While I must be content with keeping mine.
Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal!
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind,
For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them
By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No—

646, &c. Paracelsus' tendency to sarcasm reveals his weakness.
656. *Its own* = that which is incidental to the pursuit.
664, &c. *No*—Festus cannot and dare not attempt to put into words the "strange punishments" from which he shrinks, with a conventional man's horror of the unknown and mysterious. Yet he is partly right.

There are strange punishments for such. Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence) some part
Of the glory to another; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God—"I have done all
For her, not for myself!"
Par. And who, but lately,
Was to rejoice in my success like you?
Whom should I love but both of you?
Fest. I know not:
But know this, you, that 'tis no will of mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you make
And this the cause—I can no longer seek
To overlook the truth, that there would be
A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees:
—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me!
You are endowed with faculties which bear
Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
To summon meaner spirits to do their will,
And gather round them at their need; inspiring
Such with a love themselves can never feel,
Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
I know not if you joy in this or no,
Or ever dream that common men can live
On objects you prize lightly, but which make
Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem
Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste

670. Paracelsus, touched on a weak spot, rather shirks the question.

673. *No will of mine*, but a higher Will, that, &c.

683-5. Festus reveals one of the great secrets of Mastership. But he is looking at what Paracelsus is to be, rather than at what he now is.

Or die: and this strange quality accords,
I know not how, with you; sits well upon
That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
An eating brand, a shame. I dare not judge you.
The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
There's no alternative—I own you one
Of higher order, under other laws
Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!
'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole! cast those hopes away,

And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,
Man should be humble; you are very proud:
And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such!
—Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
No slow defeat, but a complete success:
You will find all you seek, and perish so!

Par. [*after a pause.*] Are these the barren first-fruits of my quest?
Is love like this the natural lot of all?
How many years of pain might one such hour
O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
What shall I say, if not that I desire
To justify your love; and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
See, the great moon! and ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this—
If I am like to compass what I seek

706. *You will . . . perish so. Cf. Psa.* cvi. 15: "And He gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul."

707. In replying, Paracelsus, touched by Michal's solicitude, says in effect: "Is your Love, then, a barren fruit, a Dead Sea apple? Surely not! And I have won it by being what I am."

By the untried career I choose; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error: and TO KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us; where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour: chance—for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
As little knows he what unlocks their fount.
And men have oft grown old among their books

726–37. In this supreme passage Browning sums up the doctrine of Divine Immanence—teaching that "The kingdom of God is within you." Tennyson, though as usual with a less certain touch, strikes the same keynote in *The Ancient Sage*, 31–6: "If thou wouldst know the Nameless," &c,

To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what long years
Of unremitted labour ne'er performed:
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours!
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
By age and waste, set free at last by death:
Why is it, flesh enthrals it or enthrones?
What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,

754-64. Paracelsus' suggestion is to some extent that of physical science—manifestation is strictly conditioned by the relative perfection of the instrument. But this fact is far from proving soul to be merely a function of matter, as Prof. William James demonstrates in his Ingersoll Lecture on *Human Immortality*.

765-70. It is a curious pathological fact that supersensual powers are most often manifested during periods of sickness and low vitality, or in neurotic subjects, and may be induced by fasting and self-mortification. This, however, in no way reflects upon the genuineness of many of the phenomena produced. *Cf.* Prof. W. James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and A. Besant's *Theosophy and the New Psychology*.

When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess, or languor—oftenest death's approach,
Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved—and he goes mad; and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Accloys the spirit! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God,
But elevate the race at once! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat the angels yet!
Such is my task. I go to gather this,
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's?
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from His, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,

770-7. Probably an allusion to Christopher Smart and his great *Song of David*, written while insane. Browning has made him the subject of one of his *Parleyings*.

785-7. This passage makes it clear that the object of Paracelsus' search is "esoteric" knowledge—the secret of man's being and destiny, revealed in the Mysteries common to all great religions.

And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
And all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence, parting with a youth
Like theirs who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the rest—
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections, laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved. Till then—till then . . .
Ah! the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types!
See, see they look on me: I triumph now!
But one thing, Festus, Michal! I have told

806–10. Paracelsus arrogates to himself the possession of the "Higher Indifference"; but it may be questioned whether, at this stage of his career, desire is so entirely a thing of the past as he would imply. "Kill out desire; but if thou killest it, take heed lest from the dead it should arise again." (*The Voice of the Silence.*)

All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—
Do you believe I shall accomplish this?
Fest. I do believe!
Mich. I ever did believe!
Par. Those words shall never fade from out my brain!
This earnest of the end shall never fade!
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver:
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!
Fest. We wait you when you rise!

II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE, *Constantinople; the House of a Greek Conjurer.* 1521.

PARACELSUS.

Par. Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,
With all that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs
Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight. 'Tis done at last!
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud
Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once
The heights already reached, without regard
To the extent above; fairly compute
All I have clearly gained; for once excluding

This scene, dated nine years after the first, marks a pause for self-analysis and reflection when one stage of the quest is over. The mention of the Conjurer's House is significant.

6. *Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.* The Arabs use verses of the Koran for the decoration of their walls, arms, and implements. The Alhambra is thus decorated.

A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes—
And all, because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much,
Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make up the sum: and here, amid the scrawled
Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results!

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed as when acquired; he was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinise the little gained: the whole
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life,—and my life! Nothing to do,
No problem for the fancy, but a life
Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this
Remembrancer set down concerning "life"?
"'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.'
It is the echo of time; and he whose heart

25. *Genethliac*, a calculator of nativities, an astrologer.

28–9. "*A few discoveries*"—those of zinc, hydrogen, and laudanum; by no means so contemptible as Paracelsus would here imply.

Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
Was copied from a human tongue, can never
Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him
Till some one hour's experience shows what nothing,
It seemed, could clearer show; and ever after,
An altered brow and eye and gait and speech
Attest that now he knows the adage true
'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.'"

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any: now, let my time be!

Now! I can go no farther; well or ill,
'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance.
I cannot keep on the stretch; 'tis no back-shrinking—
For let but some assurance beam, some close
To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die.
Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true: "I shall not quit
His chamber till I know what I desire!"
Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once

44–5. "*He whose . . . human heart*," *i.e.*, man born of woman.

48–53. These lines well mark the gulf which divides intellectual from spiritual perception, knowledge from wisdom: and the effects of the latter on life.

56–62. Paracelsus forgets for the moment that there is no failure save in ceasing from effort.

66. The "rest" of cessation from effort is contrasted with the rest of attainment spoken of in line 78. *This* in line 81 = the former.

Encountered, gathers strength by moments! Rest!
Where has it kept so long? this throbbing brow
To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease! To dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place!
My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assigned, made sure for ever! To lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!
Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once!

What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all
Been undergone for this? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
Slightingly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
End things or mend them,—why, I could not choose
A humbler mood to wait for the event!
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task;
The rest is God's concern; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far

89, &c. Paracelsus pulls himself together, and tries to feel that it is the motive, not the consequence, of an action which matters: "Your concern is with the action only, never with its fruits." But as yet expression outruns conviction.

Continuing his soliloquy, he describes himself as having

That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them; behold,
He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus
Serène amid the echoes, beams and glooms!
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,
Both well! What's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vows,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
If not love, say, like love: there was a time

rooted all love from his heart (here he confounds love with desire) and focussed his consciousness wholly on the plane of the intellect. The "happy strip of land" (line 171) seems to mean the past life of susceptibility to the emotions; the "dead gulf" (line 175) the present life, guided by pure reason; the

When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise
And counsel and grave fears—where is he now
With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we . . . gone! gone! the better. I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
I have made life consist of one idea:
Ere that was master, up till that was born,
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure; till one morn
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been forgotten;
All is one day, one only step between

"primal light" (line 184) spiritual perception, which has died out, like a candle in an airless chamber, while the quest was being pursued without rather than within.

Paracelsus realizes that this loss implies an "inner ruin" compared to which the "first" (*i.e.*, the loss of the sunshine of love)

The outset and the end: one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence: life, death, light and shadow,
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight:
A wondrous natural robe in which she went.
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
Into assured light in some branching mine
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe;
I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land:
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too!
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens; last
I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light
From its own putrefying depths alone.
Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand;
Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length:
God may take pleasure in confounding pride

is as nothing. Looking deeper, he begins to discover flaws in his own motive (191, &c.). Yet he pleads in self-justification the completeness of his past sacrifices.

The passage from 221 to 228 is obscure. *She* (line 224) would appear to represent the ideal pursued, and in 228 *sleep*

By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
I am here, in short: so little have I paused
Throughout. I never glanced behind to know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am!

Oh, bitter; very bitter!
And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
Plague beneath plague, the last turning the first
To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
In tears which burn! Would I were sure to win
Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
To opal shafts!—only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remained supreme and pure as ever!
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed?
O God, the despicable heart of us!
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart!

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
Single rewards, and ask them in the lump;
At all events, once launched, to hold straight on:
For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit

(= ease) is contrasted with death (= the ideal revealed as an illusion). One is tempted to suggest that *nursling* (222) really = nurse, *i.e.*, the ideal again.

More mistakes are apparent in Paracelsus' attitude from line 229 onwards. He apprehends God in one aspect only, that of

Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
Full consummation! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength; and that is gone
Already in the getting these you boast.
Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
"Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth
To light; this hast thou done: be glad! Now, seek
The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting!"

And yet 'tis much, surely 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrived with inexhaustible light; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!
And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?
Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense!
Was she who glided through my room of nights,
Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
God! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake?

God! Thou art Mind! Unto the Master-Mind
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
All else I will endure; if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, Thy thunder smite me down,
I bow me; 'tis Thy will, Thy righteous will;

Mind, and conceiving God as a Thinker implores Him to spare his own independence as a thinking man—to leave his personality intact. In the unwillingness to sacrifice this lies the root of failure. A further weakness is found in the wish to retain human limitations in order to appear more phenomenal (253–6).

I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die;
And if no trace of my career remain
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
In these bright chambers level with the air,
See Thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
Hast Thou done well by me? So do not Thou!
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!
Hold me before the frequence of Thy seraphs
And say—"I crushed him, lest he should disturb
My law. Men must not know their strength: behold,
Weak and alone, how he had raised himself!"

But if delusions trouble me, and Thou,
Not seldom felt with rapture in Thy help
Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost intend
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour,
To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From Thine own blinding crown, to smile, and guide
This puny hand, and let the work so wrought
Be styled my work,—hear me! I covet not
An influx of new power, an angel's soul:
It were no marvel then—but I have reached
Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!
Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith, but only one!
That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain way
To mould them, and completing them, possess!
Yet God is good: I started sure of that,

One is reminded of the problem presented by Marlowe's great heroes—the assertion of the potential supremacy of the human will coupled with a complete misunderstanding of how to make that supremacy actual.

And why dispute it now? I'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this
Had reached me: a fire-labarum was not deemed
Too much for the old founder of these walls.
Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my course
So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Could find no place in it. True, I am worn;
But Who clothes summer, Who is Life itself?
God, that created all things, can renew!
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
As bursts the flower from earth and root and stalk?
What use were punishment, unless some sin
Be first detected? let me know that first!
No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

[*A voice from within.*]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
Long ago, but all too low,
So that scarce a care it stirred
If the voice was real or no:
I heard it in my youth when first
The waters of my life outburst:
But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
That voice, still low but fatal-clear—

265. *A fire-labarum . . . walls.* An allusion to Constantine's vision of a fiery cross during his struggle with Maxentius, A.D. 312. The "labarum," or Standard of the Cross, was afterwards adopted throughout the Roman army. Constantine made Byzantium his capital in 330 A.D., and changed its name to Constantinople.

As if all Poets, God ever meant
Should save the world, and therefore lent
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do His work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
So, mourn cast off by Him for ever,—
As if these leaned in airy ring
To take me; this the song they sing.

"Lost, lost! yet come,
With our wan troop make thy home.
Come, come! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee!
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
So sank we in those old years,
We who bid thee, come! thou last
Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast,
And all together we, thy peers,
Will pardon ask for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch but work no more,
Who gaze on life but live no more.
Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
The message which our lips, too weak,
Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
Our fault: such trust, and all a dream!

297, &c. The warning sung by the shades of lost poets to Aprile reminds us of the vision of Chatterton, which is said to have appeared to Francis Thompson when he was meditating suicide. These mournful spirits, who "sank" beneath life's burden, are here conceived as spending their exile in the weary and often fruitless task of striving to deter others from failing as they have failed.

Yet we chose thee a birthplace
Where the richness ran to flowers;
Couldst not sing one song for grace?
Not make one blossom man's and ours?
Must one more recreant to his race
Die with unexerted powers,
And join us, leaving as he found
The world, he was to loosen, bound?
Anguish! ever and for ever;
Still beginning, ending never!
Yet, lost and last one, come!
How couldst understand, alas,
What our pale ghosts strove to say,
As their shades did glance and pass
Before thee, night and day?
Thou wast blind as we were dumb:
Once more, therefore, come, O come!
How shall we clothe, how arm the spirit
Who next shall thy post of life inherit—
How guard him from thy speedy ruin?
Tell us of thy sad undoing
Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
Our weary task, ever renewing
Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
Our powers, and man they could not save!"

Aprile *enters.*

Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?
Art thou the Poet who shall save the world?
Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.

340. Both Paracelsus (line 200) and Aprile (line 332) have had before them the idea of a successor who shall complete their unfinished work (*cf.* 348–53). Upon their first meeting, each looks upon the other as this predestined man.

Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on mine!

Par. Ha, ha! why crouchest not? Am I not king?

So torture is not wholly unavailing!
Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair?
Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
Myself of after-time, my very self
With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
Who robes him in my robe and grasps my crown
For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?
I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
That such might come, and thou didst hear the while!

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine; my hair
Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
The siren's! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained!
Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest?
I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed
In after-time; that I should hear the earth
Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,
While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Ah, fiend, I know thee, I am not thy dupe!
Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap
The harvest sown by sages passed away.
Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,

351. *A fault*, &c., *i.e.*, on the part of Paracelsus.

358. Who is the Siren? Fame? Or the lust of the flesh? Or perhaps the Imagination prostituted to the service of the lower nature? (*cf.* Maccallum's interpretation of the character of Lancelot in *Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story*.)

As if, except through me, thou hadst searched or striven!
Ay, tell the world! Degrade me, after all,
To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!
Apr. Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy not:
Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will sit
Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
To fill thy throne: but none shall ever know!
Sing to me; for already thy wild eyes
Unlock my heart-springs, as some crystal-shaft
Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
After long time: so thou reveal'st my soul.
All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear!
Par. (His secret! I shall get his secret—fool!)
I am he that aspired to KNOW: and thou?
Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved
Par. Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.
Apr. Thou deem'st
That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,

369 is parenthetic.

378–81. Obscure and difficult lines. The metaphor of eyes unlocking heart-strings is so confused that one may fancy the confusion to extend to the simile which follows. Does Browning speak of a subterranean stream, suddenly issuing into the sunshine? Or does the "crystal shaft" refer to some column in a building, or perhaps in a cave, and is the "chance blaze" a ray of light, falling on it after years of darkness and revealing the stuff of which it is formed? The latter seems the most likely interpretation, but there is no clearness in the presentation of the image.

386, &c. Aprile attributes the failure of his own love-quest to a storing up of limitless desire, whereas the true ideal of the poet (he now realises) must be to use and enjoy earth while aspiring heavenward (396–7). *Cf.* also 491–5.

Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
Of realising even the frailest joy,
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
Neglecting nought below for aught above,
Despising nothing and ensuring all—
Nor that I could (my time to come again)
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost! lost!
O ye who armed me at such cost,
How shall I look on all of ye
With your gifts even yet on me?
Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all!
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den:
They spread contagion, doubtless: yet he seemed
To echo one foreboding of my heart
So truly, that . . . no matter! How he stands
With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
Which turns to it, as if they were akin:
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
Nearly set free, so far they rise above
The painful fruitless striving of the brow
And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set
In slow despondency's eternal sigh!
Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause?)
I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm!
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

418. *By thy fealty*, alluding to the homage offered by Aprile in 340.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.
First: I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted
Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree
Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-king
Regal for his white locks; no youth who stands
Silent and very calm amid the throng,
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
Until the tyrant pass; no lawgiver,
No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils,
Given by a god for love of her—too hard!
Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
Or blend with others struggling in one form,
Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
With a fit frame to execute its will—
Even unconsciously to work its will—
You should be moved no less beside some strong,

421, &c. Aprile, like Browning himself, is barely content with "this [gift] of verse alone." He, the priest of Love and Beauty, would celebrate their mysteries as sculptor (421), painter (450), orator (464–5), and musician (475–7), thus demonstrating the oneness of all the arts—diverse symbolical forms of worship offered to that which transcends symbols.

428–9. Perhaps a reminiscence of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, line 1141.

440–3. Art deals with aspiration and conflict, not merely with harmony and attainment. The idea of the "rare spirit fettered to a stubborn body," as well as of the converse problem, is a favourite one with George Eliot (*cf.* her poem, *A Minor Prophet*). It is one of the chief functions of Art to reveal the true relation between Matter and Spirit.

Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it
With its own splendour! All this I would do:
And I would say, this done, "His sprites created,
God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
Appointed with the various objects needed
To satisfy its own peculiar wants;
So, I create a world for these my shapes
Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!"
And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and wastes,
Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,
And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone:
Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,
Marts, theatres and wharfs—all filled with men!
Men everywhere! And this performed in turn,
When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes
And fears and hates and loves which moved the crowd,
I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak; no thought which ever stirred
A human breast should be untold; all passions,
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir

453. *Wyvern.* A fictitious monster allied to the dragon and the griffin, having its two legs and feet like those of the eagle.

Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well:
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in a grand array of words.
This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.
Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
Having received all love bestowed on it,
I would die: preserving so throughout my course
God full on me, as I was full on men:
He would approve my prayer, "I have gone through
The loveliness of life; create for me
If not for men, or take me to Thyself,

475, &c. Here, as elsewhere (*cf. Abt Vogler* and *Charles Avison*), Browning speaks of Music as the most transcendent of the Arts, the one with the highest possibilities before it, and for that very reason the least developed and understood. The same view is taken by Dr. R. Bucke in *Cosmic Consciousness*, where it is suggested that Music may be the vehicle of the higher or intuitional consciousness, as language is of the rational or intellectual. Browning here compares Music to that "interstellar space" which played so large a part in the metaphysical science of the Middle Ages, and which is now once more becoming recognised as "the womb of Nature, and perhaps her grave." *Cf.* Sir Oliver Lodge, *The Ether of Space*.

483. *God full on me*, a favourite phrase of Browning's, suggested by the metaphor of sunlight. The poet thinks of himself as storing and reflecting upon his fellow-men the light of God's love.

485. *Create for me*—more such loveliness.

Eternal, infinite Love!"
If thou hast ne'er
Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.
Par. Ah me!
Apr. But thou art here!
Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glory; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim,
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time: nay, listen!
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
We will be wise in time: what though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way? 'Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal

491, &c. Aprile once more admits his mistake—he has been a dreamer, "blind with glory," and forgetful of the limited service which the earth-bound, exiled soul must render uncomplainingly. Hence, while Paracelsus' existence has lacked sustaining warmth, Aprile's has burnt itself away. Lines 510–553 are occupied with a somewhat too elaborate and laboured illustration of this thought, from which the speaker comes back to descant upon the poet's function of interpreting the common things of life, and finally to attribute to Paracelsus the success which he has missed in reconciling the ideal with the actual.

A bare and skeleton framework. Had we means
Answering to our mind! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle: how rear thereon
My palace? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling; gems are for the East;
Who heeds them? I can pass them. Serpents' scales,
And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins
Must help me; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to: still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
"Had I green jars of malachite, this way
I'd range them: where those sea-shells glisten above,
Cressets should hang, by right: this way we set
The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag."
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,
Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what joy
Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach!
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,
To let my followers know what such things are!
I would adventure nobly for their sakes:
When nights were still, and still the moaning sea,
And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
And fling my gains to them, worthless or true—

"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far for them,
Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,
But happy plucking them at any price.
To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you!
And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed them,
The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew!"
Thus for my higher loves; and thus even weakness
Would win me honour. But not these alone
Should claim my care; for common life, its wants
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:
The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language. I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine henceforth,
Imbued with me, though free to all before:
For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this
Would need a meaner spirit, than the first;
Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit:
As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow
And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all this,

How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out one, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?
And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
By memories and regrets and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years
Had passed and still their love possessed thee wholly,
When from without some murmur startled thee
Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,

574, &c. Aprile's account of the poet's visions, tormenting, dominating, and compelling, reminds the reader of such lives as those of Coleridge, Shelley, and Burns. Paracelsus, in i. 553–9, also speaks of the hopeless magnitude of the task which inspiration lays upon genius—the bringing to birth of truths that are many and yet one, the demonstration of that unity under diversity which only genius and saintship can dimly perceive. No wonder that the quest is endless, and that the seeker ofttimes "crazes" under its burden.

Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells
And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
And, to that end, select some shape once more?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm?
Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;
Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord!
Par. Clasp me not thus,
Aprile! That the truth should reach me thus!
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint!
Apr. My king! and envious thoughts could outrage thee!
Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last! What care
Through me or thee? I feel thy breath. Why, tears?
Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me?
Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!

609–11. The unmerited praise heaped upon him by Aprile first brings Paracelsus to a recognition of his own shortcomings.

615–16. *Cf.* C. Patmore, *Magna est Veritas*, "For want of me the world's course will not fail." Aprile has grasped more of the spirit of service than Paracelsus.

618–37. On Paracelsus' realisation of one part of his mistake, *see* Introd., chap. iv., under *Aprile*.

We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less
Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
I, too, have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:
What penance canst devise for both of us?

Apr. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness! Even
Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I speak,
And now I die. But I have seen thy face!
O, poet, think of me, and sing of me!
But to have seen thee and to die so soon!

Par. Die not, Aprile! We must never part.
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part? —never!
Till thou, the LOVER, know; and I, the KNOWER,
Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear!
We will accept our gains, and use them—now!
God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!

Apr. To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.
Hush! hush!
Ha! go you ever girt about
With phantoms, powers? I have created such,
But these seem real as I!

Par. Whom can you see
Through the accursed darkness?

Apr. Stay; I know,
I know them: who should know them well as I?
White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward!

Apr. Yes; I see now. God is the PERFECT POET,
Who in His person acts His own creations.
Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush!
Par. Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,
To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
And their deep import. Live! 'tis not too late.
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
Michal shall smile on you. Hear you? Lean thus,
And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word
Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile!
Apr. No, no. Crown me? I am not one of you
'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.
Par. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile! Let me love!

I have attained, and now I may depart.

648-9. A fine expression, from the poet's standpoint, of the act of sacrificial emanation by which the worlds were made.

649, &c. *See* remarks in Introduction, p. 54.

III. PARACELSUS

SCENE, *Basil; a chamber in the house of Paracelsus.* 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out!
Fest. True, true.
'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change
Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhoped renewal
Of our affections.
Par. Oh, omit not aught
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection: spare not that! Only forget

This scene takes place at an interval of five years from the last. Paracelsus is more than ever conscious of essential failure —failure in attitude and motive; and the consciousness chafes him the more because, by a strange irony, his former critic, Festus, is now converted by his outward success, and ready to extol instead of blame.

8–10. Paracelsus objects to Festus' demand that all which has passed during the fourteen years' separation (the "twenty" of line 18 seems to be an error) shall be forgotten; the hopes and fears of his friends for himself he would fain hear described.

The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.
Fest. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive:
The wondrous Paracelsus, Life's dispenser,
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,
Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
As best I could the promptings of my spirit
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.
Par. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?
Fest. Just so.
Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,
Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days.
Respect all such as sing when all alone!
Fest. Scarcely alone: her children, you may guess,
Are wild beside her.
Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:

36. Paracelsus thinks wistfully of a soul at peace with itself, as his own has never been.

A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct.
No change, no change! Not but this added grace
May blend and harmonise with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since.
So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me?
Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you!
Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed
Adventure, or devising its reward;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
For it was strange how, even when most secure
In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—
How you would laugh should I recount them now!
I still predicted your return at last,
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop; did one of which
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .
Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw, restless boy!
Fest. Oh, no: the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!

Can I forget the anxious voice which said,
"Festus, have thoughts like these e'er shaped themselves
In other brains than mine? have their possessors
Existed in like circumstance? were they weak
As I, or ever constant from the first,
Despising youth's allurements and rejecting
As spider-films the shackles I endure?
Is there hope for me?"—and I answered gravely
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
For all your glorious . . .
Par. Glorious? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall
With all the said recallings, times when thus
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale
As now. Most glorious, are they not?
Fest. Why—why—
Something must be subtracted from success
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
You are changed, very changed! 'Twere losing nothing
To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.
Par. My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:
You will best gain your point, by talking, not
Of me, but of yourself.

86–7. *Turned you pale*, *i.e.*, with dread at their aspect of mortality. The *stolen* of Festus' conventional reply (line 92), of course refers to death.

Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
His namesake! . Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
And I am Death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
Warped even from his go-cart to one end—
The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick
He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed
All traces of God's finger out of him:
Then died, grown old. And just an hour before,
Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,
He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice
Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors
God told him it was June: and he knew well,
Without such telling, harebells grew in June;
And all that kings could ever give or take
Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
Just so, allowing I am passing sage,

111. *Death's familiar*, *i.e.*, as a physician. The lines which follow refer to an old sycophant mentioned in biographies of Paracelsus.

It seems to me much worthier argument
Why pansies,[1] eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—
Than all fools find to wonder at in me,
Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
I say this from no prurient restlessness,
No self-complacency, itching to turn,
Vary, and view its pleasure from all points,
And, in this instance, willing other men
Should be at pains, demonstrate to itself
The realness of the very joy it tastes.
What should delight me like the news of friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?
Ofter than you had wasted thought on me
Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss!
But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:
God knows I need such!—So, you heard me speak?

Fest. Speak? when?

Par. When but this morning at my class?
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here?—that 'tis part of my proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
To my great reputation, and no small

143-4. A different point of view from that of ii. 137–160, before the meeting with Aprile.

[1] Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.—Dorn.

Danger of Basil's benches, long unused
To crack beneath such honour?
Fest. I was there
I mingled with the throng: shall I avow
Small care was mine to listen?—too intent
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes!
What can I learn about your powers? but they
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,
Your actual value; yet they worship you,
Those various natures whom you sway as one!
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .
Par. Stop, o' God's name: the thing 's by no means yet
Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's labour
—At least in substance? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due
Precision and emphasis—you, besides, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool—allowed to be
A notable advantage.
Fest. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me!
Par. I laugh? Ha, ha! thank heaven,
I charge you, if 't be so! for I forget
Much, and what laughter should be like! No less,
However, I forego that luxury,
Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
True, laughter like my own must echo strangely
To thinking men; a smile were better far;
So, make me smile! If the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long

168–9. An awkward inversion for "understanding the subject a whit more," &c.

Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are born
Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.
Never change, Festus: I say, never change!
Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all!
Par. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
—Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words
I have preserved. She told me she believed
I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
I then engaged in, I should meet success),
And yet be wretched: now, she augured false!
Fest. Thank Heaven! but you spoke strangely: could I venture
To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
Henceforth less sweetness in his own, awakes
Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear friend,
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Your lot was not my own!
Par. And this, for ever!
For ever! gull who may, they will be gulled!
They will not look nor think; 'tis nothing new

193, &c. Festus says in effect: "You bit me, strangely, not to alter: could I think that mere solicitude for *me*, lest I should feel jealous of your honours, made you thus serious? Put aside any such idea!"

199, &c. Paracelsus replies to the mention of his "resplendent course" only. How great is the credulity of men! Yet Festus might have seen further than the rest. (*Feared you*, 209 = feared your perspicuity.) In 210 Paracelsus takes refuge in bitter irony. He then blames himself (228, &c.) for trying to communicate to Festus what is "past his power to comprehend," yet the longing for sympathy is so great as to urge him at length to a plain confession (254–7).

In them: but surely he is not of them!
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,
Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye
Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
A weaker vision; would remain serene,
Though singular, amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
I have vowed long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad.
Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me
Be fixed much longer; for it seems to spell
Dimly the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough! Old eastern books
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
Remained unchanged in semblance; nay, his brow
Was hued with triumph: every spirit then
Praising, *his* heart on flame the while:—a tale!
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?

Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
Were raised supreme?

Par. Good: I do well, most well
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
With what 'tis past their power to comprehend?
I should not strive now: only, having nursed
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth.
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,

221, &c. *Cf. Paradise Lost*, i. 591–3.

Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone;
One who, in youth found wise enough to choose
The happiness his riper years approve,
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad
And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him
The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
And warned the weak one in such tender words,
Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
That oft their memory comforted that friend
When it by right should have increased despair:
—Having believed, I say, that this one man
Could never lose the light thus from the first
His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
At even my gain if it disturb our old
Relation, if it make me out more wise?
Therefore, once more reminding him how well
He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—
I have not been successful, and yet am
Most miserable; 'tis said at last; nor you
Give credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the world.

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me?

Par. You know, or—if you have been wise enough
To cleanse your memory of such matters—knew,
As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
Or plot or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,

Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded
Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days!
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
I have pursued this plan with all my strength;
And having failed therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the prize
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have right
To vex your frank good spirit, late so glad
In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend:
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!
Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;
That answers not my purpose; for 'tis like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
Here Œcolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed,
And staring,—that the zany of the show,

273–5. "Ruin as signal as the prize would have been had I succeeded."

296–300. The biographers record several instances of Paracelsus' thus offending his learned audience by what they considered unseemly behaviour in the lecture-room.

Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
His trappings with a grace but seldom judged
Expedient in such cases:—the grim smile
That will go round! Is it not therefore best
To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way? Where are the signs I seek,
The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
Due to all quacks? Why, this will never do!
Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole; nought beside!
The effect of watching, study, weariness.
Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
To Michal's friend.
Par. I have said it, dearest Festus!
For the manner, 'tis ungracious, probably;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,
And scalding tears, ere long: but I thought best
To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still?
Fest. No; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,

304. *This*—probably some sign of emotion on the part of Festus.

317–21. *Cf.* Coventry Patmore—

> "Become whatever good you see;
> Nor sigh, if forthwith fades from view
> The grace of which you may not be
> The subject and spectator too."

Shall rise from it with eye so worn, that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone,
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects :
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.
Par. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last! 'Tis so with all!
First, they set down all progress as a dream ;
And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success!
Fest. Few doubtful steps? when death retires before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most, swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul?
When . . .
Par. When and where, the devil, did you get

326–32. The popular opinion runs either to one extreme or the other, and the pioneer is first decried, then deified, by the mob.

338–41. An allusion to laudanum and its effects.

This notable news?
Fest. Even from the common voice;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.
Par. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding, God ne'er troubles Him about
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting . . . I offend: forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main; and hereupon
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago
(The prophet!) I should fail—and I have failed.
Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realised as yet?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?
Or that their innate . . .
Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matter
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.

349–50. Paracelsus, to whom Magic is "the highest power of the human spirit to control all lower influences for the purpose of good," naturally shows indignation at Festus' slighting reference to it as "folly." Unseen powers and forces are to him a demonstrable reality.

And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now: this morning's strange encounter—you
Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints at peace,
To judge by any good their prayers effect—
I knew you would have helped me!—Why not He!
My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close?
How goes it with Aprile? Ah, they miss
Your lone, sad, sunny idleness of Heaven,
Our martyrs for the world's sake; Heaven shuts fast:
The poor mad poet is howling by this time!
Since you are my sole friend, then, here or there,
I could not quite repress the varied feelings
This meeting wakens; they have had their vent,
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what
In my time was a gate) fronting the road
From Einsiedeln to Lachen?

376. *With Luther's leave—i.e.*, begging Luther's pardon for mentioning so un-Protestant a doctrine.

379. Paracelsus declares that Festus, if dead, would have come to his aid—then, it may be asked, why does not Aprile do so? The answer suggested is that martyrs like Aprile miss (*i.e.*, fail to attain) the peace of heaven, and hence cannot help their friends on earth.

391. *Rear-mice.* Probably, says Berdoe, a device in the arms on the gate; but why not literal rear-mice, *i.e.*, bats?

Fest. Trifle not:
Answer me, for my sake alone. You smiled
Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
Yourself, might blot the else so bright result;
Yet if your motives have continued pure,
Your will unfaltering, and in spite of this
You have experienced a defeat, why, then
I say not, you would cheerfully withdraw
From contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—
But surely you would, ne'ertheless, withdraw.
You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love;
No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat
Your very words: once satisfied that knowledge
Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
Yourself the first. But how is the event?
You are defeated—and I find you here!
Par. As though "here" did not signify defeat!
I spoke not of my little labours here,
But of the break-down of my general aims:
For you, aware of their extent and scope,
To look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice! A professorship
At Basil! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained

395, &c. *You smiled*; *cf.* l. 227.

408. *How is the event?—i.e.*, What has actually happened?

409. *Here* = in the Basel lectureship; *cf.* 148–50.

413–17. "It is remarkable that *you* should regard the giving of such lectures as an end commensurate with my aspirations."

419–20. *Reasonably . . . delights*, *cf.* the account given of past sacrifices in ii. 137, &c.

Of life's delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands,—
Far be it from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
Of infinite space, or justify the host
Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice,
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come:
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
Had promised him interminable years;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin; while another piebald knave
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor, and upset the brother;
Brushed past the conjurer; vowed that the first gust
Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,

429-30. *He . . . for me, i.e.*, he might have died as far as I was concerned.

446. *Cross-grained devil in my sword.* We are told on the authority of Oporinus that Paracelsus possessed a sword in the hilt of which a familiar spirit was supposed to reside, and this superstition was apparently encouraged by Paracelsus. We

Not easily laid: and ere an hour, the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
A day—and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose spite
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince to life;
To the great reputation of the seer
Who, confident, expected all along
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
Much largess from his highness to the monks—
And the vast solace of his loving people,
Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to defer
The burning of some dozen heretics,
Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
Touching his sickness: last of all were joined

learn further that "others consider that which he kept in the hilt, to which he gave the name of Azoth, to be a most powerful medicine, or even the Philosopher's Stone itself" (*Melch. Adam*). Naudæus (*Hist. of Magic*) says of the familiar spirit "that although the alchemists maintain that it was the secret of the Philosopher's Stone, yet it were more rational to believe that if there was anything in it, it was certainly two or three doses of his laudanum, which he never went without because he did strange things with it, and used it as a medicine to cure almost all diseases." Some say his celebrated Azoth was magnetised electricity. In *Hudibras* ii. 3 there is a reference to the above-mentioned superstition:—

> "Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
> Shut in the pummel of his sword,
> That taught him all the cunning pranks
> Of past and future mountebanks."

Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement, by seizing me
Who--doubtless some rank sorcerer—had endeavoured
To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So let them pass. Those shelves support a pile
Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles,
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy ;
They authorise some honour ; ne'ertheless,
I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;
He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,
And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the dead."
I weary you, I see. I merely sought
To show, there's no great wonder after all
That while I fill the class-room, and attract
A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay ;
And therefore need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer—if I please :
For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;
You mind the fables we have read together.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word.

489. *For 'tis but right, &c.* *Cf. St. Luke* x. 7: "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;
But surely you must feel how vague and strange
These speeches sound.
Par. Well, then : you know my hopes ;
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain :
That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
On that account is idle, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,
As useless : and all this was taught to me
By the convincing, good old-fashioned method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?
Fest. Dear Aureole ! can it be my fears were just?
God wills not . . .
Par. Now, 'tis this I most admire—
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
And see the will in question charactered
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.
I know as much of any will of God's,
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way ; but there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,
Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply know
I am no master here, but trained and beaten

509. *My fears—i.e.*, those hinted at in i. 306, 665.

Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me,
Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
To view the whole thing as a task imposed,
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—
Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty, vile delights, undreamed of
Or spurned before ; such now supply the place
Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,
Chill mushrooms, coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well your words, I own
It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater praise ;
Because they are too glorious to be gained,
You do not blindly cling to them and die ;
You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer ;
And though too harsh and sudden is the change

537, &c. The argument is, that submission to earth has its compensations in "fungus pleasures."

548. Insert *the* before *greater*.

551–3. An allusion to *Genesis* xxxii. 24, and reminiscent also of the worsting of Gareth by Lancelot (Tennyson's *Gareth and Lynette*, 1191–5).

To yield content as yet, still you pursue
The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy strewn.
'Tis well: and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from Him whom no man serves in vain.
Par. Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive,
The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would be as a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds.
To be consistent I should die at once;
I calculated on no after life;
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,
As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the less averse to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—
You will not understand—but 'twas a man
With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,
With the same fervour and no more success,
Perishing in my sight; who summoned me
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
That God should interfere in my behalf,

557–8. Conventional though genuinely meant consolation, very characteristic of a man of Festus' type. *Cf.* his platitude of 807.

559–89. Paracelsus' argument is that it would have been more honest in him to confess his own loss of aspiration, and with it of all pleasure in life, but that instead of doing this he has felt bitterly resentful of past sacrifices made to a vanished ideal; and finally, the humiliation of realising his own resentment has led him to follow Aprile's advice, and give to the world the little he has gained. *Cf.* 648–51.

But to distrust myself, put pride away,
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
To men. I have not leisure to explain
How since, a singular series of events
Has raised me to the station you behold,
Wherein I seem to turn to most account
The mere wreck of the Past,—perhaps receive
Some feeble glimmering token that God views
And may approve my penance : therefore here
You find me, doing most good or least harm.
And if folks wonder much and profit little
'Tis not my fault; only, I shall rejoice
When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
And the curtain falls : I must hold out till then.
Fest. Till when, dear Aureole ?
Par. Till I'm fairly thrust
From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
And even professors fall : should that arrive,
I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
We sin : God's intimations rather fail
In clearness than in energy : 'twere well
Did they but indicate the course to take
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
Be spared a further sample ! Here I stand,
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.
Fest. Be you but firm on that head ; long ere then
All I expect will come to pass, I trust :
The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
Meantime, I see small chance of such event :
They praise you here as one whose lore, already
Divulged, eclipses all the Past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
Are faint anticipations of a glory

About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Par. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day,
Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
Mere novelty, nought else; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
The teacher that oppugns them, till he once
Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
May reckon on their rancour in his turn;
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,
But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development. Why swell the list?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it: remove all these, remains
A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture: still these few
Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

617, &c. The enumeration of the five classes of so-called students who fill the lecture-room is very apposite. After the elimination of the novelty-hunters (618), the superstitious (620), the quarrelsome partisans (623), and the fashionable flatterers (628), only a mere handful of genuine learners remains.

Par. God grant it so!
I would make some amends: but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine: much to say, small skill to speak!
Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,
Though for an instant; therefore, only when
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth
So dearly purchased—only then I found
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself;
That to possess was one thing—to display,
Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it!
One grows but little apt to learn these things.
Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour to so little use.
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once?
Par. A task, a task!
But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged

641, &c. This speech of Paracelsus forms an admirable argument for our modern training of teachers. Even the sage and the enthusiast may discover that "to possess is one thing, to display another."

658, &c. Festus shows a little more guile than usual in his argument that it is well to quit so untenable a position. Paracelsus at first urges the plea of duty unfulfilled; then, becoming candid once more, admits that it is really habit which binds him to his task, and unfits him for any other work. Yet the desire for infinite knowledge is not extinct.

In the confessing vein? Despite of all
My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,
Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,
My inclinations free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit.
In plain words, I am spoiled: my life still tends
As first it tended. I am broken and trained
To my old habits; they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible: no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when
Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,
And send me back content to my dull round?
How can I change this soul?—this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes,
So well adapted to their every want,
To search out and discover, prove and perfect;
This intricate machine whose most minute
And meanest motions have their charm to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain,
And I alone:—how can I change my soul?
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares, and quite subdue
Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine,
So he but prosper—whither drag this poor,
Tried, patient body? God! how I essayed
To live like that mad poet for a while,
To love alone! and how I felt too warped
And twisted and deformed! What should I do,

Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life—and die as I began!
I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake
Of beauty only; nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness;
My nature cannot lose her first imprint;
I still must hoard and heap and class all truths
With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
Would God translate me to His throne, believe
That I should only listen to His words
To further my own aims! For other men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I quench as they
This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
With beauty for itself alone: alas!
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive
I shall o'ertake the company, and ride
Glittering as they!

Fest. I think I apprehend
What you would say: if you, in truth, design
To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
I tell, you listen; I explain, perhaps
You understand: there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?

712. *Thriveless* = unsuccessful.
714. *Addressed* = put on.

When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?
That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places: 'twill be worth the while.
Fest. Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said
To call for this? I judged from your own words.
Par. Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch describes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
You thither turn at once: or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be!
You find me here, half stupid and half mad;
It makes no part of my delight to search

731, &c. Browning here attributes to Paracelsus his own horror of public self-dissection. *Cf. House.* Tennyson expresses the same feeling in *The Dead Prophet.*

741. Paracelsus, maddened first by Festus' laborious efforts to understand him, and next by his innocent bewilderment, finds relief in sarcasm which, however, is despairing rather than cynical. Festus takes everything with equal seriousness, tries to extract a meaning from the maddest and most foolish utterances, and, above all, requires that nothing shall be suggested or implied merely, but that the whole case shall be stated in explicit terms for his consideration. Paracelsus may, as he says, be "brutal," but he is sorely tried.

Into these things, much less to undergo
Another's scrutiny; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you:
And the event is, you combine, contrast,
And ponder on my foolish words, as though
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage!
Is there no fear, no shrinking or no shame?
Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?
Must I go deeper? Ay or no?
Fest. Dear friend . . .
Par. True: I am brutal—'tis a part of it;
The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,
How should you know? Well then, you think it strange
I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope: and this, because
You know not what temptation is, nor how
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
You are to understand, that we who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
To stanch our wounds, secure from further harm:
We are assailed to life's extremest verge.
It will be well indeed if I return,
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!

768–72. A tortuous sentence. The meaning is, "We are not merely assailed by a single volley, having escaped which, though with some injuries, we can rest in safety; rather, we are pursued by many volleys, as long as life itself lasts."

I would forget hints of another fate,
Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.
Fest. Another! and what?
Par. After all, Festus, you say well: I am
A man yet: I need never humble me.
I would have been—something, I know not
what;
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.
There are worse portions than this one of mine.
You say well!
Fest. Ah!
Par. And deeper degradation!
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
And vanity, should become the chosen food
Of a sunk mind; should stifle even the wish
To find its early aspirations true;
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—
An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies;
Should make it proud to emulate or surpass
Base natures in the practices which woke
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!
Utter damnation is reserved for Hell!
I had immortal feelings: such shall never
Be wholly quenched: no, no!
My friend, you wear
A melancholy face, and, certain 'tis
There's little cheer in all this dismal work.
But 'twas not my desire to set abroach
Such memories and forebodings: I foresaw
Where they would drive. 'Twere better to discuss
News of Lucerne or Zurich; or to tell

783. The higher the aim, the deeper is the fall of him who ceases to pursue it.

Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.
Fest. I have thought: trust me, this mood will pass away.
I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.
These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold.
Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest
From your ambition, have been spurned by you; 810
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them all,
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
Avails to awe, save these delusions bred
From its own strength, its self-same strength disguised—
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,— 820
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!
I know you.
Par. And I know you, dearest Festus!
And how you love unworthily; and how
All admiration renders blind.
Fest. You hold
That admiration blinds?
Par. Ay and alas!
Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration will.

823. *Love unworthily* = love a worthless object.
826. *You* = one. Festus maintains that love is clear-sighted; but that, recognising faults, it either deliberately

Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.
I say, such love is never blind; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
Love broods on such: what then? When first perceived,
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they disturb?
—To make those very defects an endless source
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-back
Lest, since all love assimilates the soul

ignores them (838), lets them become a stimulus to tenderness (841), or, in the last resort, defends them out of a desire not to rival and outdo the beloved in virtue (843). It is, he says, the lovers of "mighty spirits" who play into the hands of the fiends rather than those who hate them. What follows is difficult. *Thence* (855) seems to mean from the hearts of haters, and *whose* (858) = hate's. The image of the great man (or of the ideal which he represents?) is conceived as enshrined, involuntarily, in the very hearts of those who hate and malign him. They are blinded, as those who love and admire are not. So, by a rather forced transition, Festus returns in 860 to the statement with which he began, and proceeds to apply it to the relations between himself and his friend.

To what it loves, it should at length become
Almost a rival of its idol? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits
Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;
And least from those who hate, who most essay
By contumely and scorn to blot the light
Which forces entrance even to their hearts:
For thence will our defender tear the veil,
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
The giant image of Perfection, grown
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
In the untroubled presence of its eyes!
True admiration blinds not; nor am I
So blind. I call your sin exceptional;
It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God!
I speak of men; to common men like me
The weakness you confess endears you more,
Like the far traces of decay in suns.
I bid you have good cheer!

Par. *Præclarè! Optimè!*

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest
Instructing Paracelsus! yet, 'tis so.
Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
Eventually to follow; as the sea

866. It is by the wasting of suns that the planets are warmed and nourished.

867. *Præclarè! Optimè!* = bravo! well done!

871, &c. Paracelsus excellently defines the position of the pioneer, and claims it for himself.

Waits ages in its bed, till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time: thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought: nay, they do this;
For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others: I precede my age:
And whoso wills, is very free to mount
These labours as a platform, whence their own
May have a prosperous outset. But, alas!
My followers—they are noisy as you heard,
But for intelligence—the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

Fest. I would supply that art, then, and withhold
Its arms until you have taught their mystery.

Par. Content you, 'tis my wish; I have recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.
Of course, they are for swaggering forth at once

Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles!
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step!
A proper sight to scare the crows away!
Fest. Pity you choose not, then, some other method
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these:
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners: let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-times;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect: sooner or later,
You shall be all-revealed.
Par. The old dull question
In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess
Two sorts of knowledge; one,—vast, shadowy,
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:
The other consists of many secrets, caught
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
Prime principles which may conduct to much:
These last I offer to my followers here.
Now bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid me
Revert to the wild courses just abjured:

912. *The marvellous art* = printing, discovered about the middle of the fifteenth century. Frobenius set up his press at Basel in 1491, and Œcolampadius and Erasmus were among his readers. Festus is, as usual, severely practical in the recommendations he offers.

923-5. *One . . . the other* = esoteric and exoteric knowledge; the greater and the lesser mysteries.

I must go find them scattered through the world.
Then, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them
As any other—to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them,
And acting on them ; and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well :
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,—
Were blocks !

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something
About your waywardness : you burned their books,
It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Par. And who said that ?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
With Œcolampadius. As you know, the purpose
Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent

933–4, 945–8. See Introduction, pp. 11–13, and Glossary.

952, &c. An answer to Luther's Confession of Faith was issued in 1528 by Zuinglius and Œcolampadius (*see* Glossary); and these two afterwards met Luther and Melanchthon in conference at Marburg. Œcolampadius is said to have been even more rigidly evangelical than Luther. Carolostadius also led a sect of fanatical iconoclasts. Paracelsus himself was Protestant indeed, but, as might be expected, a Nonconformist in the full sense of the word.

For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
Apprised me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.
Par. Ah, I forgot: you went . . .
Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear
Of Luther, now at Wittemburg—(you know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
Basil and . . .
Par. I remember. Here's a case, now,
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention: pray, does Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed:
His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was under
And heaven above them—points which chance or time
Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come; and next,
Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those
Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves—perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
—As never will my wise class its instructor.
And you saw Luther?
Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul!

967–71. An awkward sentence. "His plain denial of established points which ages had sanctified, and which man had supposed could never be oppugned . . . did more," &c.

Par. True: the so-heavy chain which galled mankind
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker
Of our own project—we who long before
Had burst our trammels, but forgot the crowd
We should have taught still groaned beneath the load:
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!
Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
What benefits mankind must glad me too:
And men seem made, though not as I believed,
For something better than the times produce.
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
From Suabia have possessed, whom Münzer leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector
Will calm in blood! Well, well—'tis not my world!

Fest. Hark!

Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees; the embers too are grey:
Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement: see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep
The tree-tops all together! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Par. Ay; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree
By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze:
Those happy times will come again.

993–4. An allusion to the Peasants' War of 1525, in which Münzer, an Evangelical Socialist, was one of the leaders (*see* Glossary).

Par. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning wind
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
And bartered sleep for them?
Fest. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.
Par. Another world!
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come? Man must be fed
With angels' food, forsooth; and some few traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
In a supreme contempt of all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly
As here and there a gem would constitute
The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no:
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity;
These are its sign and note and character,

1008–9. *Cf. Macbeth*, II. ii. 36, &c.

1011, &c. Paracelsus here gives vent to a natural reaction against his early idealism. He has ignored the facts of life, forgotten that man is as yet "a little lower than the angels," exalted his potential divinity as actual; now, he is inclined to lament that in pursuing the unattainable he has atrophied the simple human emotions and forfeited their fruit. As usual, his reaction carries him to a fresh extreme; he is ready to belaud the human at the expense of the divine.

And these I have lost!—gone, shut from me for ever,
Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more!
See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
Diluted; grey and clear without the stars;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if
Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
His hold; and from the East, fuller and fuller
Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in;
But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.
Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,
Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,
All thick and glistering with diamond dew.
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day:
And we have spent all night in talk like this!
If you would have me better for your love,
Revert no more to these sad themes.
Fest. One favour,
And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood
Shall pass away, if light once more arise
Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
To hope, and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember—not our love alone—
But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should trust on His support, (as I must think
You trusted,) is obscured and dim through you;
For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole?

1039. *That broad prickly . . . plant*, some species of cactus.

IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE, *Colmar in Alsatia; an Inn.* 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. [*To* JOHANNES OPORINUS, *his secretary.*]
Sic itur ad astra! Dear Von Visenburg
Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
We live; and shall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
I' th' shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John—
"Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
Oppose the plague!" Even so? Do you too share
Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint through *them*,
Desist for *them!* They manage matters so

Two years have passed since the last meeting with Festus. A new but silent figure—that of Oporinus—in here introduced for a moment into the poem.

At Basil 'tis like: but others may find means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes;
And, that done,—means to brand each slavish brow
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow; there that stamp shall stay
To show the next they fawn on, what they are,
This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,
Dispatch, my trusty John; and what remains
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow
For Nuremburg! Now leave us; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear:
[Oporinus *goes out.*
And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
How very kind, my first, best, only friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me!
Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall live
Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,
And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder?
I sent to you because our compact weighed

45. *Our compact*—rather a request on the part of Festus (iii. 1057) that his friend would recall him if his mood o scepticism should pass, since that mood had obscured the faith of the priest himself.

Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
At Basil, which the gods confound!)—because
Once more I aspire. I call you to my side;
You come. You thought my message strange?
Fest. So strange
That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.
Par. He said no more,
'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave
Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,
'Tis true! poor Paracelsus is exposed
At last; a most egregious quack he proves:
And those he overreached must spit their hate
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
Bare truth; and at my bidding you come here
To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend!
Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole?
Par. Oh, for purpose,
There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they sought
To benefit.
Fest. They really cast you off?
I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
Knowing his life's worth best; and how the judge
The matter was referred to, saw no cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him; nor he, again, to smother

59. *Topping* = surpassing.

His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
That Basil soon was made no place for you.
Par. The affair of Liechtenfels? the shallowest fable,
The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence!
I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
Of better things to come—would pall and pass;
And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off the mere antics of my art,
Fantastic gambols leading to no end,
I got huge praise: but one can ne'er keep down
Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again; and all for me!
I had a kindness for them, which was right;
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them: I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them, "to impart
The spirit which should instigate the search
Of truth," just what you bade me! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,
Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest. When lo! one man had tarried so long
Only to ascertain if I supported

91–6. The light of Truth is apt to blind feeble eyes; and though "The truth shall make you free," the fact remains that all are not ready for freedom.

97–115. A cynical but brilliant account of the defection of unworthy disciples (*cf.* Paracelsus' prophecy of this in iii. 617–37).

This tenet of his, or that; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most;
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong
And beaconed properly, would commend again
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,
Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy
Discovered divers verses of St. John,
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
The colic, and what not. *Quid multa?* The end
Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed
The new professor scarce a year before;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
Of which the example was some luckless wight
Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
To fill my chair and so efface the stain
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,
Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
And from my heart I wished them better suited
And better served. Good night to Basil, then!
But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
The pleasure of a parting kick.

112. A sarcasm upon such as degrade Paracelsus' magic arts into gross superstition.

Fest. You smile:
Despise them as they merit!
Par. If I smile,
'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense!
This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
—I would lay bare to you the human heart
Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
O, sages have discovered we are born
For various ends—to love, to know: has ever
One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
Of a nature in us formed to hate? To hate?
If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate!
Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.
Fest. But your plans, your plans!
I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole!

146–51. This piece of self-revelation shows clearly enough what is at the root of Paracelsus' failure. He has, despite his high aims, embraced the great heresy of separateness—has nourished the poison-plant which checks all upward growth, and indulged the ever more insistent claim of the personality to feed and thrive at the expense of other beings: forgetting that he who would attain must "lose himself to find HIMSELF."

Par. Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame,
To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo
In silence and desist from further toil
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign me
And live as they prescribe and make that use
Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,
Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
To practise the true posture for receiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance
When they shall condescend to tutor me?
Then one may feel resentment like a flame
Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,
And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood
For a possession, ages: or one may mope
Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse
Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.
But I,—now Festus shall divine!—but I
Am merely setting out once more, embracing
My earliest aims again! What thinks he now?
Fest. Your aims? the aims?—to KNOW? and where is found
The early trust . . .

157, &c. Paracelsus' nimble brain is always apt at enumerating alternatives. Here he discusses whether his own attitude under censure shall be one of crushed submission (158), unctuous complacency (161), revenge by false teaching (171), ascetic retirement (175), or forgetfulness and death (176). In reality, he is resolved to pursue a sixth course—*i.e.*, to devote himself anew to the quest.

Par. Nay, not so fast; I say,
The aims—not the old means. You know they made me
A laughing-stock; I was a fool; you know
The when and the how: hardly those means again!
Not but they had their beauty; who should know
Their passing beauty, if not I? But still
They were dreams, so let them vanish, yet in beauty,
If that may be. Stay: thus they pass in song!
[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls
Down seaside mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

190, &c. *Cassia*=an inferior kind of cinnamon; *sanda.*, a low tree something like privet, and very fragrant; *labdanum*, a sweet-smelling, gummy juice issuing from certain plants; *aloes*, the fragrant resin of the agalloch or lign-aloe of the Bible; *nard*, spikenard, also noted for its sweetness.

Mine, every word! And on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them? So, I made this rhyme
That fitting dignity might be preserved;
No little proud was I; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.
Fest. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
Did you know all! I have travelled far, indeed,
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again!
For in this mood I recognise you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy;
But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words and see
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.
Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
I am light-hearted now; what would you have?
Aprile was a poet, I make songs—
'Tis the very augury of success I want!
Why should I not be joyous now as then?
Fest. Joyous! and how? and what remains for joy?
You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.
Par. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool!
Listen: my plan will please you not, 'tis like,
But you are little versed in the world's ways.
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—

212. *My old vocation*, that o. chemistry.

217–18. *This mood*, the mood of the interview at Colmar; *horrible despondency*, that of the meeting at Basel (bk. iii.).

I will accept all helps ; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, late years have quenched :
I have tried each way singly : now for both !
All helps ! no one sort shall exclude the rest.
I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
Not one without the other as before.
Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not baulk me
Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualest delight
That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small. My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted—"what was gained?"
Nor, on the other hand, should Pleasure follow
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
With the tumultuous Past, the teeming Future,
Glorious with visions of a full success !

Fest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not? Why not prefer
Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred? When I was best, my youth

240-1. The new method is described more fully in 360 5. Paracelsus (characteristically at this stage of his career) substitutes "joy" for Aprile's "love," (*cf.* ii. 660), and by "joy" he means all fruits of desire. He is right in saying that "every joy is gain," that all experience, whether of good or evil, enriches the nature at a certain stage of growth ; but he forgets that for those who aspire to tread the homeward path this stage is over, and replaced by one of deliberate choice between transitory and relatively permanent objects of desire, with the ultimate object of attaining to a state in which desire is transcended.

Unwasted, seemed success not surest too?
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am a wanderer: I remember well
One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
Flashed through the circling clouds; you may conceive
My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure: nor shall the Present—
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
Destroy the vivid memories of the Past.
I will fight the battle out!—a little spent
Perhaps, but still an able combatant.
You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow?
But I can turn even weakness to account:
Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft!
What should I do with age? So, sickness lends
An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all
We boast of: mind is nothing but disease
And natural health is ignorance.

Fest. I see
But one good symptom in this notable scheme.
I feared your sudden journey had in view
To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes;
'Tis not so: I am glad.

Par. And if I please
To spit on them, to trample them, what then?

273–6. The process described in this powerful metaphor resembles some of the efforts of physical mediumship.

277–80. *Cf.* note on i. 765, &c.

'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit,
But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
Power to match power, my strength against their strength,
And teach them their own game with their own arms—
Why, be it so and let them take their chance!
I am above them like a god, there's no
Hiding the fact: what idle scruples, then,
Were those that ever bade me soften it,
Communicate it gently to the world,
Instead of proving my supremacy,
Taking my natural station o'er their heads,
Then owning all the glory was a man's!
—And in my elevation man's would be.
But live and learn, though life's short, learning, hard!
And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
The penitent empiric, who set up
For somebody, but soon was taught his place;
Now, but too happy to be let confess
His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
Good Pütter!

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a god!

294–301. The same taint of personality as appears in ii. 253–6.

312. Festus, goaded to irony, remarks that scorn is no divine attribute: and Paracelsus responds candidly to the rebuke.

Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am very glad
You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you
Can see the root of the matter!—how I strive
To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide
My degradation in its length and breadth;
How the mean motives I would make you think
Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow
May influence me as being mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe:
You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus!
Laugh—you shall laugh at me!
Fest. The Past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing? Is our interchange of love
Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that? For you,
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation;
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,
Or wherefore this disorder? You are vexed
As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls: not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm though all night long the famished troops
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.
Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend!
Fest. Nay, further; the delights you fain would think

The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you . . .
Par. Hush! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demands, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse:
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
The bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned:
I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy;
Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge:
So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly; this will better explain—feel here!
Quick beating, is it not?—a fire of the heart
To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity;
I hope, if he command hope; and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
To give place to some credulous disciple

360–5. *Cf.* 240–1, and note.

Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits: I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool; for night is come.
And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
Tingles for triumph! Slow and sure the morn
Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores;
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bearings,
Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme.
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow!
I lapse back into youth, and take again
My fluttering pulse, for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause His own.
See! I have cast off this remorseless care
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber has become a tent,
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
Why do you start? I say, she listening here,
(For yonder's Würzburg through the orchard-boughs)
Motions as though such ardent words should find
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,

But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!
Ha, ha!

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to reap
No unreal joy from this your present course,
But rather . . .

Par. Death! To die! I owe that much
To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
To live contented after such a fall,
To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
My time.

Fest. And you have never mused and said, '
" I had a noble purpose, and the strength
To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
And wrongly given the firstfruits of my toil
To objects little worthy of the gift.
Why linger round them still? why clench my fault?
Why seek for consolation in defeat,
In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
From ugliness? why seek to make the most
Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
With mighty effort to redeem the Past
And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
At their fit destination and my own?"
You have never pondered thus?

Par. Have I, you ask?
Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
Would some such airy project visit me:
But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
The same thing in a tale, a parable?
You and I, wandering over the world wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.

Just as we cry, "No human voice before
Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"
—Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:
What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
Some characters remain, too! While we read,
The salt sharp wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave,
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,
But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar-pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor star-shine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
Might pierce the regal tenement.

450, &c. The metre of this beautiful song, as well as some of the imagery, is reminiscent of *The Ancient Mariner* and of *Christabel*, especially as regards the use of mixed anapæsts and iambs. *See* Introd. chap. vii.

When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
  Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
  And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast!

Now, one morn, land appeared!—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check
  The shout, restrain the eager eye!"
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
  And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,

496. Does the "statue bright" represent the individual soul's ideal? If so, we are reminded of Tennyson's poem of *The Voyage* (1842), where the mariners pursue the ideal as a "fair vision" seen across "waste waters," and assuming a different form for each who follows her.

And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused we till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!
"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
Our temple-gates are opened wide,
Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
For these majestic forms"—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:
Yet we called out—"Depart!
Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
Our work is done; we have no heart
To mar our work,"—we cried.

Fest. In truth?

Par. Nay, wait: all this in tracings faint
May still be read on that deserted rock,
On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled
In order once: then follows—mark what follows:
"The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
To their first fault, and withered in their pride!"

Fest. Come back, then, Aureole; as you fear God, come!
This is foul sin; come back. Renounce the Past,
Forswear the Future; look for joy no more
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy.
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole!
Par. No way, no way! it would not turn to good,
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
'Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,
Envying such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm:
No mossy pillow blue with violets!
Fest. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
This verse-making can purge you well enough
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still: the lusts you fear, will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!
Say but the word!
Par. No, no; those lusts forbid:
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey; let some fool style me
Or king or quack, it matters not, and try
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat!
No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
If you knew how a devil sneers within me

While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!
Fest. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,
Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
Do not confide all secrets: I was born
To hope, and you . . .
Par. To trust: you know the fruits!
Fest. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust
Was self-delusion at the best: for, see!
So long as God would kindly pioneer
A path for you, and screen you from the world,
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
Of your engagement in His service—yield you
A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to say
Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,
But selfishness without example? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are fools!
In short, God's service is established here
As He determines fit, and not your way,
And this you cannot brook. Such discontent
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once!
Affirm an absolute right to have and use
Your energies; as though the rivers should say—
"We rush to the ocean; what have we to do
With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,
Sleeping in lazy pools?" Set up that plea,
That will be bold at least!

574. *At last*, used like the French *enfin*.

Par. 'Tis like enough!
The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The East produces: lo, the master nods,
And they raise terraces and garden-grounds
In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin
Another century's sleep, to the great praise
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Wake them again. I am of different mould.
I would have soothed my lord and slaved for him,
And done him service past my narrow bond,
And thus I get rewarded for my pains!
Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
God's glory otherwise; this is alone
The sphere of its increase, as far as men
Increase it; why, then, look beyond this sphere?
We are His glory; and if we be glorious,
Is not the thing achieved?

Fest. Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed you much,
And you have left your first love, and retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
And who shall call your course without reward?
For, wherefore this repining at defeat,
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes?
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,

588–96. An allusion to the genii or familiar spirits (elementals) capable of producing phenomena for those who know how to claim their services.

604. *Glorious.* There is possibly a satirical play upon the Latin sense of the word, *i.e.*, boastful.

And what success attends me?—simply talk
Of passion, weakness and remorse; in short,
Anything but the naked truth—you choose
This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return!
Par. And quickly. Oporinus
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:
And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
I know not how; not even the wine-cup soothes
My brain to-night . . .
Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?
No flattery! One like you needs not be told
We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,
Me and my cant, my petty subterfuges,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,
My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
Wrap the sound flesh?—so, see you flatter not!
Even God flatters! but my friend, at least,
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
Against all further insult, hate and wrong
From puny foes; my one friend's scorn shall brand me:
No fear of sinking deeper!
Fest. No, dear Aureole!
No, no; I came to counsel faithfully.
There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty,
Majestic spirit!—even I can see

631. *Tetter* and *morphew*, eruptive skin-disease; *furfair*, seurf or dandriff.

You own some higher law than ours, which calls
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength.
But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me; and I blame you where they bid,
Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul: the more, that sorrow
Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
So that I faint not under my distress.
But wherefore should I scruple to avow
In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
Your fate to me is most inexplicable?
And should you perish without recompense
And satisfaction yet—too hastily
I have relied on love: you may have sinned,
But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
As I would have God deal with fragile men
In the end—I say that you will triumph yet!

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus?—'tis because
You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!
Well thought on; never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all: these miscreants dared
Insult me—me she loved: so, grieve her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Par. Michal is dead! pray Christ we do not craze!

Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus!
Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
I cannot bear those eyes.

Par. Nay, really dead?

Fest. 'Tis scarce a month.

Par. Stone dead! — then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort

Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.
Fest. Aureole!
Par. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.
Fest. But not on this account alone? you surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along?
Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

673. *Julep . . . to cheat the grave*, the elixir of life, as popularly understood. Its real significance lay far deeper.
690–3. A reference to the gladiatorial games.

V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE, *Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Fest. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;

After an interval of thirteen years, we find Paracelsus on his deathbed, in a hospital at the Austrian city of Salzburg. (Another tradition says that he passed away, not at the hospital, but at a small inn near the quay). His dying speech may be taken as an epitome of Browning's philosophy, based as it is on the principle of spiritual and material evolution. Paracelsus, discovering his last and greatest error (*cf.* Introd. chap. iv., *Aprile*) now disdains all desire for absolute knowledge, and recognises the value of those limitations which are a condition of manifested life. The conclusion drawn is the same as that of *A Death in the Desert*, 589–607.

But they are dead now—very blind and dead:
He will drowse into death without a groan!

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!
And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor, glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
Another night, and yet no change! 'Tis much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands; 'tis much: but he will sure
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat swelled,
And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
Resolved to live, to lose no faculty;
Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
Until they bore him to this stifling cell:
When straight his features fell, an hour made white
The flushed face and relaxed the quivering limb,
Only the eye remained intense awhile
As though it recognised the tomb-like place,
And then he lay as here he lies.
Ay, here!
Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
Her bravest champion with his well-won meed—
Her best achievement, her sublime amends

For countless generations fleeting fast
And followed by no trace;—the creature-god
She instances when angels would dispute
The title of her brood to rank with them.
Angels, this is our angel! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
Are human; but not his: those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel before;
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!
God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!
Even as I watch beside Thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth Thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
Surely he sought Thy praise—Thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As to forget awhile its proper end.
Dost Thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side—
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth? Hadst Thou but granted him
Success, Thy honour would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
Save him, dear God; it will be like Thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;

43-5. The worshipping Festus sees in his friend and hero the representative of a "superior race" (*cf.* 710), the "Super-Man" of Nietzsche's philosophy.

We should be wroth in such a case; but Thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass away!
I know Thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt Thy love.
But what am I? Thou madest him and knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way: the quiet place beside Thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:
But he—Thou shouldst have favoured him as well!
Ah! he wakes! Aureole, I am here! 'tis Festus!
I cast away all wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me!
He mutters; louder and louder; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!
Is it talking or singing this he utters fast?
Misery, that he should fix me with his eye,
Quick talking to some other all the while!
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates its intent!—I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words.
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the Past!—His eye,
Brighter than ever! It must recognise me!

Let me speak to him in another's name.
I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.

We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell, what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once more!
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him!
Better be mute and see what God shall send.
Par. Stay, stay with me!
Fest. I will; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!
Par. Festus! Where 's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O, well enough! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!
Fest. Festus, your Festus!
Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know?
I try; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold!
Fest. My hand, see!
Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!
We get so near—so very, very near!
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down
Not when they set about their mountain-piling,
But when another rock would crown their work!
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals; though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!
Fest. And what are these to you?

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes!
Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail!
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn!
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,
Who will believe 'twas you that held me back?
Listen: there's shame, and hissing, and contempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me!
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?
Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So pick and choose, among them all, accursed!
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
No, no; I am the first and last, I think.

Fest. Dear friend, who are accursed? who has done . . .

Par. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or you,
Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others! What have you to do, sage peers?

Here stand my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow.
Only observe: why, fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me! Grey crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each prince?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,
Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay, speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:
I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:
Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge?
Fest. Peace, peace; ah, see!
Par. Oh, emptiness of fame!
Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!
—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,

182. Paracelsus refers to Galen with contempt as a representative of the old benighted medical science of the Dark Ages. *Cf.* iii. 946.

But stand no longer? What a warm light life
After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
While I remember that quaint dance; and thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat!
Fest. A light
Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
As in the angry and tumultuous West
A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The Past to stand between it and its fate.
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!
Par. Cruel! I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades;
And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!
'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
And all at once they leave you and you know them!
We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even now

193. The "delicate witch" seems to be a sorceress whom Paracelsus has visited in the hope of learning her secrets.

I am not too secure against foul play:
The shadows deepen and the walls contract—
No doubt some treachery is going on!
'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?
Have they left us in the lurch? This murky, loathsome
Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the hall
In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
There is a hand groping amid the blackness
To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
Poet? Hold on me for your life! if once
They pull you!—Hold!
'Tis but a dream—no more!
I have you still; the sun comes out again;
Let us be happy: all will yet go well!
Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,
Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?
What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
How could I still remain on earth, should God
Grant me the great approval which I seek?
I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
But men would murmur, and with cause enough;
For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
I drank thus unespied; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,

While I am calm; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them!—'Twere best consider that!
You reason well, Aprile; but at least
Let me know this, and die! Is this too much?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die!

If Thou shalt please, dear God, if Thou shalt please
We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart to Thee?
I know Thy mercy; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
That fed my youth! One only hour of that
With Thee to help—O what should bar me then!
Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here! God's creatures,
And yet He takes no pride in us!—none, none!
Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)

275–80. *Cf.* 1 *Cor.* xv. 32. Browning often employs St. Paul's argument for immortality—*i.e.*, the futility and irrationality of human life, with its limitless desires and transcendent aspirations, on any other hypothesis than that of personal and conscious survival after death. *Cf.* the whole of *Cleon.* Paracelsus' lament in ll. 287–94 is closely paralleled by Cleon's (ll. 309–27). The latter poem appeared twenty years after *Paracelsus.* *Cf.* Introd chap. v.

And other life await us not—for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn!

Well, onward though alone: small time remains,
And much to do: I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through; while I have laboured
It has decayed; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought, a sad fate! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best—
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help!
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well—
Let men catch every word, let them lose nought
Of what I say; something may yet be done.
They are ruins! Trust me who am one of you!
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane: the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon—
Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is:

I would sit down in silence with the rest.
Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once? you curse me? Why men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
That horrible scorn! You thought I could support it,
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From hate like this. Let me but totter back!
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.
Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing:
I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 'tis said and it shall be.
And now be merry: safe and sound am I
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
And even you forget me. Take my hand—
Lean on me, thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?
As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with it:
'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,
Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire

Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them
A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemption dawns!
Fest. Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear God!
Par. Ha—stay! true, I forget—all is done since!
And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;
All quackery; all deceit! myself can laugh
The first at it, if you desire: but still
You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,
Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved?
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will:
I give the fight up! let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God!
But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest; let it look
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not;
And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,

Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say, " He lived
Too much advanced before his brother men ;
They kept him still in front : 'twas for their good,
But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
That he should tell God he had never ranked
With men : so, here at least he is a man ! "

Fest. That God shall take thee to His breast, dear spirit,
Unto His breast, be sure ! and here on earth
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever !
Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee : what care
If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day ? Their theft shall be their bale :
For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator !
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
The winding sheet of subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea !
Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august ! I recognise thee first ;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest !

387. *Snowy phares*, white mountains kindled into radiant beacons by the light of the sun reflected upon them. Phare = lighthouse.

Par. Festus!
Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe!
His portion shall be mine! He has done well!
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned! Reward him or I waive
Reward! If Thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever! There are two of us!
Par. Dear Festus!
Fest. Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!
Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!
Some story, anything—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning so!
Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses, too faint to catch
A weary bee.

410-11. Browning often demonstrates that the raw material of character—strength, force, vitality—may show itself in strong sins as well as in high virtues—"great men have greater faults than little men have room for." Conventional virtue, based upon the absence of this quality, is worthless. *Cf. The Statue and the Bust.*

Par. More, more; say on!
Fest. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.
Par. My heart! they loose my heart, those simple words;
Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch:
Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
What were you doing when your voice broke through
A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
Are you alone here?
Fest. All alone: you know me?
This cell?
Par. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept out, the rats
Kept in: a snug nook: how should I mistake it?
Fest. But wherefore am I here?
Par. Ah, well remembered!
Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus!
'Tis like me: here I trifle while time fleets,

And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return!
You are here to be instructed. I will tell
God's message; but I have so much to say,
I fear to leave half out. All is confused
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.
He would not else have brought you here; no doubt
I shall see clearer soon.
Fest. Tell me but this—
You are not in despair?
Par. I? and for what?
Fest. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!
Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest,
Dear, searching face?
Fest. How feel you, Aureole?
Par. Well!
Well: 'tis a strange thing. I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been.
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the brightening weather;
But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'er-strewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;
And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
And now the air is full of uptorn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life

Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more!
Indifferent and amused but nothing more!
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus! You will die like me!

Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear!

Par. You wonder it engages me just now?
In truth, I wonder too. What 's life to me?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain? 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.

501–5. The opening out of these "new perceptions" at the moment of death may be compared to the change which transforms the water-grub into the winged dragon-fly, free of a new element.

I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still it is like some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones: that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
As though one stooped above his head to whom
He looked for confirmation and approval,
Where was it gone so long, so well preserved?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares; 'tis many a year
Since I remarked it last: and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck!)
And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose, the true purpose: that is it!
How could I fail to apprehend! You here,
I thus! But no more trifling; I see all,
I know all: my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture
Hardly befits one thus about to speak:
I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help; no help;
Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!
Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur; now put
The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;
Last, my good sword; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls
Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me!
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.
Fest. I am dumb with wonder.
Par. Listen, therefore, Festus!
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus; very happy.
Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus!
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?
Par. Ay, pardoned! yet why pardoned?
Fest. 'Tis God's praise
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .
Par. Have lived!
We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
Pardon from Him, because of praise denied—
Who calls me to Himself to exalt Himself?
He might laugh as I laugh!

555. *Azoth*, *see* Glossary.
570. *Alone* = only.

Fest. But all comes
To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them not;
They are no use that way: they should lie down
Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.
Par. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work
More harm than I have done! This is my case:
If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on Him,—
Be not deceived! It may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.
Beside I am not all so valueless:
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time!
Fest. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's sake,
What time was happy? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?
Par. When but the time I vowed myself to man?
Fest. Great God, Thy judgments are inscrutable!
Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it—
I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.

585–92. Compare the parables of the Prodigal Son (*St. Luke* xv. 11–32) and of the labourers in the vineyard (*St. Matt.* xx. 1–16).

598. The "time" meant seems to be that which followed upon the meeting with Aprile. *Cf.* iii. 573 89.

602. A play upon the meaning of Paracelsus is intended.

Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared to frame
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong soul
Alone, unaided, might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestical!

609–10. Again we have Browning's constant idea that desire implies the possibility of fulfilment, and that men grow by aspiration towards the as yet unattainable. (For the thought of "joy-hunger," one of the most ineradicable forms of human desire, *cf. Cleon*, 328.) Professor Royce is at one with Browning on this point: "The incompleteness of your present self-expression of your own meaning is the sole warrant that you have for asserting that there is a world beyond you . . . You rightly demand that reality should adequately express your whole, true meaning." (*The Conception of Immortality*, Ingersoll Lecture.)

620–22. *Cf.* Ruskin's "St. George's Creed" (*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 58)—"I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, the fulness of its mercy, and the joy of its love." *See* also *The Crown of Wild Olive*, § 106.

But this was born in me; I was made so;
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course!
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,
I stood at the first where all aspire at last
To stand: the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is He!

645-7. The threefold manifestation of the One Unmanifest is hinted at. The three aspects, however, are usually distinguished as Power (or Being), Wisdom (or Knowledge), and Love (or Bliss); and these Browning mentions in 693-8.

647-9. *Cf.* Tennyson's *Locksley Hall sixty years after*, "Boundless inward, in the atom—boundless outward, in the whole."

With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever!
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, out-branches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein! The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride!
Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado;

654-82. In this wonderful passage the whole process of physical evolution—from chaotic matter through mineral, plant, and animal life, to man—is described: and the bliss-aspect of the Supreme in manifestation is summed up in the reference to God's "ancient rapture." This quality of a divine joy in Nature is one upon which Wordsworth often dwells. *Cf. Genesis* i. 31.

Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture! Thus He dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life: whose attributes had here and there
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole,
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power—neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear:
Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthened by love: love—not serenely pure,
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant

682–712. The principle which underlies physical evolution is supplied by the words "He dwells in all." Moreover the end and aim of the first stage of the great process is made clear—the production of a being endowed with the three divine properties, master of himself and of all the grades of existence through which he has passed. So is accomplished the "creation of Man."

Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust:—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up: and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth; man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds
Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born!
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,

712–38. "The greater includes the less"; hence man, created, includes and interprets all the lower orders of life. *Cf.* the *Kabbalah*—"As soon as man was created, everything was complete, including the upper and nether worlds, for everything is comprised in man. He unites in himself all forms." Some hint of the same interpretative link is to be found in the last canto of *Saul*. This is Browning's nearest approach (and but a distant one) to that view of Nature as reflecting the moods of man, which Ruskin names "the pathetic fallacy."

A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye:
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
—And this to fill us with regard for man,
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place.
For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man's self is not yet Man!
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end

739-44. Man, even as man, is not yet perfected.

So Tennyson—

"Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass, and touch him into shape?"
(*The Making of Man.*)

And again—

"We are far from the noon of man, there is time for the race to grow."
(*The Dawn.*)

Cf. also *By an Evolutionist*, and *The Holy Grail*, 232-7.

745-74. As yet, only a few great men—the saint and the genius—have attained to that synthesis of reason with intuition which marks the next stage of the vast process—the state which Dr.

Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy!
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? O, long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Thence shall his long triumphant march begin,

Bucke calls "cosmic consciousness," and which is variously described by the mystics and the poets as beatific vision, illumination, ecstasy, and so forth. For accounts of this state, *cf.* Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, 38, &c., and *Prelude*, ii. 302, &c.; Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, xcv.; Prof. W. James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 387–8, 400; Maudsley's *Physiology of Mind*, p. 11; E. Carpenter's *Art of Creation*, p. 59; and the writings of many Eastern seers and Christian mystics. When all have reached it, a new life begins, symbolised by the fourth zone of sculpture in Arthur's hall at Camelot, where were carven men with "growing wings," typical of an unfolding divinity.

Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him !—
When all the race is perfected alike
As Man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far:
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle run by life.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they outgrow all
The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.

774-84. Here is described that spiritual growth which, when once begun, proceeds with a rapidity of which evolution in its earlier material stages was incapable. It shows itself in a widening of desire (780) and of belief (782), a distinction of the essential from the non-essential; and its result is peace. From Vivêka (= Discrimination), Vairâgya (= Indifference) is born.

781. *Proper* = peculiar, special.

785-806. Some men have already attained to the wider vision, and their task is to save the rest from the darkness of ignorance. Paracelsus refers to his statement of 623, and again declares how much more fortunate is his own position than that of men in whom Vivêka (Discrimination) is as yet undeveloped, and who are distracted by divided aims. He has always seen clearly the end to be striven for—the glorification of the divine in the human.

Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto,
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind.
On power; I could not take my eyes from that:
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the Past: only a scene
Of degradation, imbecility,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,

807–12. Yet he has failed, through seeking in man and for man *one* of the divine qualities only—Power. (*Cf. Reverie*, especially verses 29–31 and 42–3.)

813–27. Moreover, he has taken somewhat of the same point of view as the modern Christian Scientist, and has desired and anticipated the attainment of perfection here and now.

A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not be all-sufficient even now;
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring:
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
Of mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the Past,
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth: the Present for thee
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that Past's own shade whence, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor on thee yet
Shall burst the Future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven:
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man!
All this was hid from me: as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,

827–38. Looking backward, he recognises the value of analogies drawn from the Past, and by their aid deduces the progress of evolution in the future—an orderly progress still, though increasing in rapidity when consciously directed.

839–61. He tells how the ignoring of the need for a sequential process had brought him near to despair, when Aprile's appearance taught him to realise his first error, and to unite love with the knowledge which to him represented power.

As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentred strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love;
Love still too straitened in its present means,
And earnest for new power to set it free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned:
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste

862–86. Now he has discovered his second mistake, and ceased to expect in earthly life either perfect love or perfect knowledge, but only "a good in evil, and a hope in ill-success."

Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere: and why?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathise, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;
Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a third
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both:
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself,
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night, might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt;

886–94. He imagines to himself a "better-tempered spirit" who may combine his own and Aprile's qualities as the earth combines the heat of Mars with the cold of the moon—these being the two bodies nearest to her in space. (The simile is obscure, and other interpretations of the "over-radiant star" may be suggested.)

896. *Do without contempt, i.e.*, get on without feeling contempt for something.

'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me:
But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.
You understand me? I have said enough?
Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!
Par. Festus, let my hand—
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!
Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Fest. And this was Paracelsus!

GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES

Aëtius, iii. 946.

An Arian doctor, skilful in medical disputations, and the compiler of a medical cyclopædia, in which he closely followed Oribasius (*q.v.*). He was the founder of the heretical sect called after him. Died at Constantinople, *c.* 367.

Averröes, iii. 947.

An Arab philosopher and physician (b. at Cordova in 1126, d. 1198). He held the doctrine of a world-soul, to which individual souls return at death. He was the interpreter of Aristotle's philosophy, both to Mahommedans and to the Christian Schoolmen, and became of great authority, in various parts of Europe, as philosopher and logician.

Avicenna, iii. 947.

An Arab philosopher and physician (b. *c.* 980). He combined the doctrines of Galen (*q.v.*) and Aristotle, and from the twelfth to the seventeenth century was one of the principal medical authorities in European universities.

Azoth, v. 555.

The alchemist's name for mercury. Arab. *az-zāūg*, from Pers. *zhīwah* = quicksilver. The term was applied by Paracelsus to his great discovery, laudanum. Writers on magic describe Azoth as "the creative principle in Nature; the universal panacea or spiritual life-giving air—in its lowest aspects, ozone, oxygen, &c." See note on iii. 446.

Basil, iii. 152, 211, 290, 418 and *passim*.

The proper German form of the name is Basel; French, Basle or Bâle. The University of Basel, in which Paracelsus occupied a chair of physic and surgery, was founded by Pope Pius II. in 1459, and has numbered among its professors several men of great eminence, including Erasmus, Œcolampadius, and the mathematician Euler.

Carolostadius, iii. 961

Andreas Rudolf Bodenstein Carlstadt (b. at Carlstadt 1480, d. 1541) was one of the first Reformers, the friend, and afterwards the antagonist, of Luther. He was Professor of Divinity at Wittemberg, where he became the leader of a fanatical set of iconoclasts. Being banished, he became Professor of Theology at Basel, and died there.

Castellanus, iii. 294.

The name given to Pierre Duchâtel, a French prelate, Bishop, successively, of Tulle, Maçon, and Orleans. When at Basel, Erasmus procured him employment as corrector of the press with Frobenius. A tolerant man in an intolerant age.

Colmar, iv.

A town in Alsatia, to which Paracelsus resorted when driven out of Basel by the Liechtenfels scandal.

Einsiedeln, i. 120, 232, 446; ii. 127; iii. 210, 394, 1042; iv. 534, 550.

A town in Canton Schwyz, Switzerland. It is noted for its Benedictine abbey, founded in the ninth century, a famous place of pilgrimage on account of the black image of the Virgin which it contains. Paracelsus was born near the town in 1493, and Zwinglius was a priest there, 1515–19.

Erasmus, iii. 480; v. 97.

The great Dutch scholar and writer (b. at Rotterdam 1467, d. at Basel 1536). As a thinker he was far in advance of his age, and did much, by his writings, to advance the causes of religion and learning. He was a friend of Frobenius, the great printer, and is said to have chosen Basel as the home of his old age on account of the printing press there.

Frobenius, iii. 295, 481.

Johann Frobenius (b. 1460, d. 1527) was an eminent printer, who established a press at Basel in 1491. He was an intimate friend of Erasmus, all of whose works he printed, as well as a Latin Bible, Greek New Testament, and many other books.

Galen, iii. 946; v. 182.

Claudius Galenus (b. at Pergamos, *c.* 130; d. *c.* 200), an eminent physician, and one of the most famous of ancient writers on medical and philosophical subjects. Eighty of his works are still extant. He lived long in Italy, where he attended the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and L. Verus, and probably died in Sicily. He was the first and greatest authority on the pulse, and as an anatomist, combined patient observation with clear description. In physiology and therapeutics he was influenced by the Hippocratic theories of the four elements and the four humours of the body.

Jove, v. 124, 129.

Jupiter or Zeus, the greatest of the Olympian gods, and the son of Cronus (Saturn), whom he overcame in the war between the Titans and the Olympians.

Lachen, iii. 394.

A village on the Lake of Zurich, not far from Einsiedeln. The hermit Meinrad, the founder of Einsiedeln, originally lived on the top of the Etzel, near this place.

Liechtenfels, iv. 5, 76.

A canon of Basel, who, having been cured *in extremis* by Paracelsus, refused to pay his fee and was supported in his meanness by the magistrates. Paracelsus, forcibly resenting this interference of the authorities, was compelled to leave Basel in 1526.

Luther, iii. 344, 376, 959, 964, 981; iv. 213.

The great German reformer (b. 1483, d. 1546) was ten years the senior of Paracelsus. It is not clear that the two ever met, but Paracelsus seems to have held, at any rate in part, the doctrines of Luther, though we cannot imagine that he ever permitted himself to be bound by his authority.

Mayne, i. 811 ; ii. 127 ; v. 419.

The River Main rises close to Baireuth and flows with a general direction eastward to its junction with the Rhine at Mainz. Würzburg stands within a loop of the river, about midway of its course.

Munsterus or Münzer, iii. 295, 994.

Thomas Münzer (b. 1490, d. 1525) was one of the most violent of the Anabaptist leaders. He was an adherent of Luther, but afterwards preached against him, having adopted much more extreme and fanatical views. He took part in the Peasants' War, and being taken prisoner was tortured and beheaded.

Œcolampadius, iii. 293, 952.

The Latin form of the name of Joannes Hausschein or Hussgen (b. 1482, d. 1531), who was one of the chief leaders of the Reformation in Switzerland. After an early life occupied with the study of law and theology, he made the acquaintance of Erasmus, and assisted him in his edition of the New Testament. He afterwards became a monk, but being influenced by the writings of Luther, left his convent and entered upon his career as a reformer, as preacher, and Professor of Theology at Basel. He adopted the views of Zwingli in the Eucharistic controversy, and towards the end of his life became opposed to Luther on some points.

Oporinus, iv. 1, 619.

Johannes Oporinus was secretary to Paracelsus for two or three years (about 1526–8), and afterwards became a printer at Basel. Many of the accusations against Paracelsus (of drunkenness, blasphemy, &c.) proceeded from this secretary, but we are told that he afterwards repented of his treachery to his master.

Oribasius, iii. 946.

An eminent Greek physician of the fourth century. He was the friend and physician of Julian the Apostate and the author and compiler of various works on medicine.

Paris and Padua, v. 99.

The universities of Paris and Padua, with that of Bologna, had European reputation in the Middle Ages. That of Padua was founded by the Emperor Frederick in 1221, and modelled itself upon the University of Bologna, which was established for the teaching of canon and civil law. That of Paris owed its existence to the twelfth-century movement known as Scholasticism, and theology held the principal place among the subjects taught there.

Phaeton, v. 127.

The son of Phœbus, who aspired to drive the chariot of the Sun, but dropped the reins, and was struck with thunder by Jupiter in order to avoid a general conflagration.

Pütter, iv. 7, 13, 304, 312.

Probably one of the medical magnates of Basel, whose theories and practice had been attacked by Paracelsus.

Rhasis, iii. 211, 946.

Mohammed Rhazes (*c.* 855–922) was an Arabian physician who practised at Baghdad. He was a follower of Hippocrates and Galen, and gave the earliest extant description of small-pox.

Salzburg, v.

Salzburg, the capital of the province of that name, stands on the River Salzach, eighty miles E. by S. of Munich. It is the seat of an archbishopric and contains a large Benedictine monastery and various fine churches. Paracelsus died here in 1541 in the hospital attached to the Church of St. Sebastian, and his monument is to be seen in the church.

Serapion, iii. 947.

A physician belonging to the empirical school of medicine in Alexandria. He had a great reputation in antiquity, and was the author of a treatise on simples, much used in the Middle Ages.

Stagirite, The, i. 417.

A name given to Aristotle from his birthplace, Stagira, in Macedonia.

Suabia, iii. 994.

Suabia was an ancient duchy in the south-west of Germany, bounded by Franconia, Switzerland, Burgundy, and Bavaria. The modern kingdom of Würtemberg embraces the greater part of it. It was the theatre of some of the most violent scenes of the Peasants' War of 1525, in which Münzer (*q.v.*) was one of the leaders.

Titans, v. 124.

The older gods, headed by Saturn. The reference is to their struggle with the younger gods, headed by Zeus.

Torinus, iv. 2.

Alban Thorer (b. 1489, d. 1550). He was originally a philologist and grammarian, but afterwards turned to the study of medicine, and in 1537 was appointed to the chair of theoretical medicine at Basel.

Trithemius, i. 105, 241, 503; iii. 33, 64.

Johannes Trithemius, Bishop of Spanheim, at this time resident at Würzburg. He was a great astrologer and alchemist, of mystical tendencies, and held views regarding man and nature which appear to have influenced Paracelsus to a considerable extent.

Von Visenburg, iv. 1.

Probably a professor at Basel.

Wittemberg, iii. 959.

A town of Prussian Saxony and the cradle of the Reformation, for in its university Luther was professor; here he burned the papal bull, and it was to the door of the Schloss-Kirche that he nailed his famous theses.

Würzburg, i. 67, 123; ii. 127; iii. 31, 259; iv. 408.

An ancient and important town of Franconia. It is the seat of a university not founded till 1582. The classes attended by Paracelsus, therefore, were not connected either with this university or with the earlier short-lived one founded in 1403, but seem to have been private ones started by Bishop Trithemius.

Zoroaster, v. 188.

The Greek name of the Persian Zarathushtra, the great teacher who founded the ancient Parsee and Magian religion.

Zuinglius, iii. 955.

Huldreich Zuingli (b. 1484, d. 1531) was the greatest, the most liberal and open-minded of the Swiss Reformers. In 1516, the year before the publication of Luther's theses, he was preacher at Einsiedeln, and was already showing his leaning towards Reformed doctrines in his attacks on the superstitions attendant on the pilgrimages to that place. As preacher at Zurich he was instrumental in excluding Sanson, the vendor of papal indulgences, from the city walls, and in 1523 his sixty-seven theses, setting forth the Reformed doctrines, were accepted by the city. Soon afterwards began the schism among the Reformers on the question of the Real Presence, and we find Zwingli ranged with Œcolampadius and others on the one side against Luther, Melancthon, &c., on the other. Zwingli took part in the conflict between Zurich and the Roman Catholic Cantons in 1531, and was killed at Cappel.

The Gresham Press.
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED,
WOKING AND LONDON.

00013409

Digitized with financial assistance from
Ms.Swati Thakar
on 13 March, 2020